

THE WEST LOTHIAN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP LIMITED

BOARD MEETING

Wednesday 18 November 2020 at 14.00

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minute of meeting on 12 August 2020 and matters arising

Main business items

4. Coronavirus (COVID 19): Scotland's Strategic Framework
5. 2021/26 strategy
6. Staff survey during lockdown, summer 2020
7. Transforming our operating model
8. 2021 RSL rent setting
9. a) Business and remobilisation update
b) Building compliance update
10. New build approval: Winchburgh BB

Other business items

11. Delivery Plan 2020/21 and quarterly performance report
12. Finance report
13. Governance update
14. Corporate risk register
15. Assurance update
16. AOCB

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Lynsey Fotheringham, Head of Housing

Approved by: Olga Clayton, Group Director of Housing and Care

Subject: 2021-26 Strategy

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

1.1. This report:

- provides a summary of the strategy sessions held by the Board in September;
- seeks the Board's approval for our draft 2021-26 Strategy, *Your Home, Your Community, Your Future*; and
- updates the Board on the engagement plan for staff, customers and stakeholders in respect of our new strategy

2. Authorising context

2.1. Under the Group Authorising Framework, the Board is responsible for developing and agreeing our strategy within the envelope of overall Group strategic objectives.

3. Risk appetite and assessment

3.1. We do not have a single risk appetite in respect of our strategy. The risk context facing the Group has changed in light of Covid-19, with an economic shock and expected resultant increases in unemployment and financial difficulties, particularly among lower income households. Our strategy for 2021-26 reflects this new context.

4. Background

4.1. During September, two WLHP Board strategy workshops were undertaken to consider any necessary updates to the strategy following our experience of the pandemic. The Group Board agreed the title, updated vision statement and executive summary of our new Group strategy in September and subsequently agreed the full Group strategy in October. A copy of the full Group strategy has been made available via AdminControl.

5. Discussion

(i) *Board strategy discussions*

5.1. A short summary of the feedback from the Board workshops is provided in Appendix 1, with the full feedback sheets available on request. The key themes are set out in more detail below.

- The vision and five strategic themes remain an appropriate and relevant way to structure the strategy.
- The vast majority of the WLHP draft strategy remained appropriate and, as the Fraser of Allander Institute noted, more timely and relevant than ever in light of the pandemic.
- The Covid pandemic has provided an accelerant, which we should embrace, to the objectives and plans already set out in the draft strategy in two respects;
 - to increasing the use of digital methods for engaging with our customers and delivering services which are convenient, reliable and give the customer greater control;
 - over 85% of our staff work within our communities on a daily basis. Our staff operating model should transition to a more hybrid home/office working approach now for staff who were previously office-based, accompanied by wider support for our people to work and lead in a more digital context.
- The importance of supporting the overall health and wellbeing of our customers and communities following the pandemic.
- Affordability for our customers will be a key challenge due to the economic impact of Covid-19, particularly in terms of the labour market; so the proposals to bring forward the limit on rent increases to 2.9% from 2025 to immediately was strongly supported.
- The importance of stakeholder support in delivering some key aspects of the strategy, especially local authorities and the Scottish Government in respect of future policy and funding for housing and care.
- The green agenda is increasingly important, and we should seek to work with Scottish Government at Group level to deliver the funding necessary to further retrofit customers' homes to save them money on fuel bills and reduce our carbon footprint.
- Challenges in delivering our development and investment work due to Covid-19 restrictions were discussed, as well as the potential impacts and risks in relation to our supply chains.

- The potential structural changes in the labour market increasing home working and the potential increase in demand for access to open spaces and properties which can be used to support home working across all tenure types
- The asks of the Group Board reflected the view that Wheatley Solutions and the Wheatley Foundation are two key enabling vehicles in the Group that support our partner organisations in service delivery. In terms of Solutions, the Board were keen to see a continued development of digital service offerings and engagement platforms for customers. The role of the Foundation in supporting customers and the importance of a continued role in facilitating training and employment for our customers was highlighted, especially with the impact on our communities of the furlough scheme due to end.
- There was a strong appetite for us to contribute at a local and national level to the homelessness agenda. This was however within the context of strong feedback that appropriate wraparound support must continue to be provided to a significant number of homeless people using the model of Housing First, and we also have a responsibility to maintain balanced, sustainable communities.

(ii) Revised full strategy

- 5.2. Appendix 2 contains the revised strategy document in two formats A) a word version where the changes are in **blue text** for ease of reference and B) a revised 'clean' designed version. The updated strategy reflects the Board's agreement that the vast majority remained appropriate. Our strategy supports our ambition to increase the number of new homes we can build, to keep rents affordable and to expand the regeneration outcomes we can deliver.
- 5.3. Our new strategy, **Your Home, Your Community, Your Future**, maintains all of the ambition originally contained in our 2020-25 draft, but takes account of the impact of Covid and the changed political and economic context. The strategy reflects:
- Accelerating the introduction of a **new blended operating model**, which maintains a focus on achieving a strongly personalised approach
 - Strengthening our commitment to investment in our **digital infrastructure** to enhance our ability to provide services and engage with our customers digitally.
 - In tandem seeking to use our influence to improve digital inclusion for our customers and support all customers to have affordable home broadband connections
 - Setting ambitious proposals for how we can be a key partner at local and national level as part of a Group response in **tackling homelessness**
 - Drawing on our experience of the pandemic to **strengthen our understanding of families** and tailor our service offering accordingly. This includes introducing a specific family satisfaction target

- Accelerating our planned rent increase assumption reductions **to year 1** of the strategy

The key changes are highlighted in blue text for ease of identification.

(iii) Engagement and consultation

- 5.4. Across Group we are planning to communicate the overall Group strategy and operating model to all Group staff through Zoom sessions between November and February. These sessions will each have a range of staff across Group involved so that ideas can be shared and synergies explored. The Group-wide sessions will be led by the Executive Team with support from the wider leadership team. With c2700 staff across Group, this will mean an intensive programme of engagement to cover the whole workforce.
- 5.5. The WLHP Head of Housing will follow these sessions up with our own staff to ensure the key themes and objectives of the WLHP strategy are understood, more detailed questions can be addressed and our staff's ideas developed.
- 5.6. We will also be arranging virtual governance events on Zoom, to allow Board members (in mixed groups) to discuss the new Group Strategy in more detail. This will allow all Board members to understand the wider Group context more fully.
- 5.7. A public launch of the Group strategy is anticipated around April 2021, before the Scottish elections. Individual discussions will be held with key stakeholders such as local and national government partners around this time. However, given the context of likely continuing Covid restrictions, it is not anticipated that we will hold any large meetings or media events with stakeholders.
- 5.8. Our communication with customers will include setting out the key highlights in our online and social media forums, as well as our written publications and communications such as Connect (our staff intranet). Following the staff engagement sessions, our teams will be well briefed on the key elements of our strategy and will be able to discuss these with customers as part of their ongoing engagement.

6. Key issues and conclusions

- 6.1. The draft 2021-26 strategy reflects the outcome of engagement and discussion with the Board. There was a strong degree of consensus that the majority of the previous draft strategy remained appropriate, with amendments in certain key areas to reflect the impact of the pandemic and changed economic context.
- 6.2. We propose to accelerate progress towards some of the objectives, such as our working model for staff, and expand our ambitions in other areas such as energy efficiency and broadband in our customers' homes. We propose to reflect a strengthened role in addressing the impacts of the pandemic on financial hardship in our communities, and set out more concrete targets for our role in addressing homelessness.

6.3. Given the uncertainty which remains regarding the impact of the pandemic on our future development and investment activity, the strategy targets in these areas will be reviewed in conjunction with the updated business plan at the next meeting.

7. Value for money implications

7.1. There are no specific value for money implications associated with this report.

8. Impact on financial projections

8.1. Our business plan projections continue to be updated to ensure they align with the objectives set out in our strategy.

9. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

9.1. We will continue to keep the Scottish Housing Regulator informed of any changes to our strategy. Our strategy has been developed taking into account and reflecting the views, need and priorities of our tenants in line with the requirements of Regulatory Standard of Governance (2).

10. Implementation and deployment

10.1. A performance management framework is being developed and will be presented to the February Group Board for approval. This will be accompanied by a delivery plan for 2021/22, being the first year of the new strategy period. These documents will set out the key performance measures and strategic projects which will be reported to the Board on a quarterly basis to enable progress against our strategy to be monitored.

11. Partnership implications

11.1 None

12. Equalities impact

12.1. The strategy recognises the importance of diversity and any significant changes to service delivery in the implementation of our strategy will be subject to impact assessments.

13. Recommendations

13.1 The Board is asked to:

- 1) Note the feedback from the WLHP Board strategy workshops;
- 2) Agree, subject to any comments, the updated WLHP Strategy: *Your Home, Your Community, Your Future*; and
- 3) Note and provide any comment on the proposed approach to staff, customer and stakeholder engagement

List of appendices

Appendix 1- WLHP Board Feedback

Appendix 2 – draft strategy (tracked and final)

Appendix 1 – WLHP Board Feedback

Board	Challenges/barriers or opportunities/enablers	Vision, brand, flag and message	Strengthening/adjusting existing strategic priorities	Asks of Group
WLHP (2 sessions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity to look at what additional value we can provide to our customers to support them, particularly given the impact of Covid-19 and rise in UC claimants ▪ Opportunity to increase focus on the overall Health and Wellbeing of our customers ▪ Digital connectivity is increasingly important and challenge will be people having the tools to engage in a digital environment ▪ Key focus for the first year or two of the strategy will be the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit, so the flexibility the annual strategy refresh will be key to ensuring it remains current ▪ Opportunity to increase our contribution to homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vision remains appropriate and the emphasis on supporting communities is clear ▪ Title – while we continue to be ambitious, the tone needs to reflect the operating context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key focus on maintaining excellent customer service whilst growing the stock of WLHP ▪ Need to expand digital engagement and make the best use of data analytics to support HOs ▪ Strengthen our approach to sustainability to ensure we adequately support the green agenda ▪ Stronger links with other organisations to support the overall wellbeing and resilience of our customers and communities ▪ More explicit on the WLHP specific elements such as local engagement and partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of support for customers to access affordable Wi-Fi/broadband options ▪ Use national influence in relation to digital poverty and the green agenda

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Your Home, Your Community, Your Future

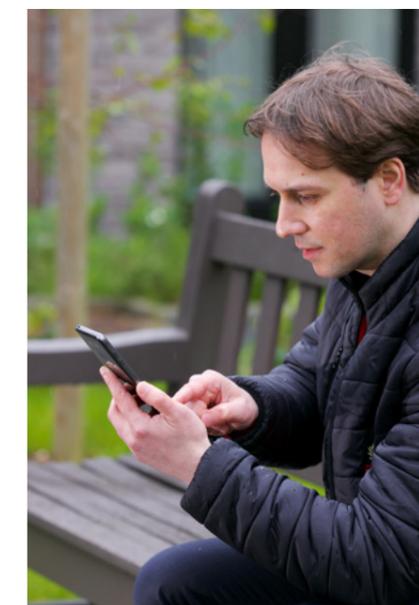
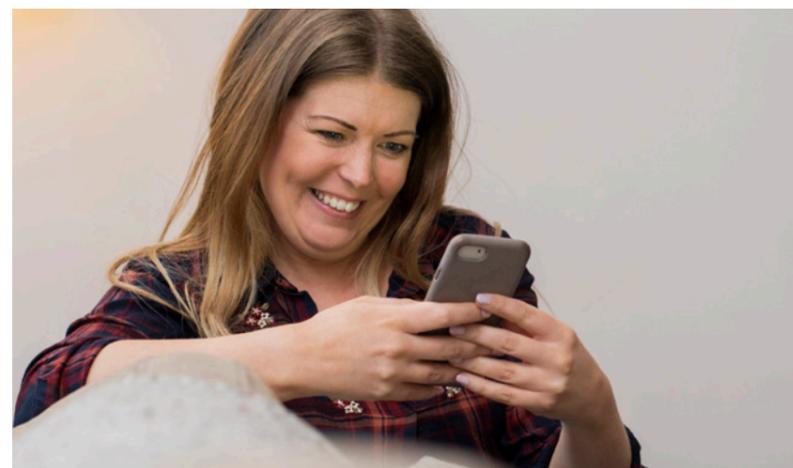


2021-2026



West Lothian Housing Partnership part of Wheatley Group
Our five-year strategy





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5. Enabling our ambitions

Our key performance indicators





OUR VISION FOR 2021 TO 2026

WLHP, part of Wheatley Group, is rooted in its local communities and committed to delivering outstanding, customer-focused services.

Your Home, Your Community, Your Future, sets out how we will take our services to the next level on this, the next stage of our journey, from 2021 to 2026.

An ambitious new-build programme has seen us work closely with our key partners, West Lothian Council and the Scottish Government, to bring forward hundreds of much-needed new affordable homes. Over the lifetime of this strategy we will build up to 660 more homes while continuing to invest in the fabric of our existing homes.

But our mission is, and always will be, focused on much more than just bricks and mortar. **“Better homes, better lives”**, is what guides us now, and as we look to the next five years.

Having the keys to one of our homes will continue to lead to a new world of opportunity. We will remain committed to helping people break down the barriers, too often created by disadvantage and poverty. That will include offering people in our homes real opportunities – such as jobs and training – to improve their lives and have more control over what happens in their area. We will also work with our partners and tenants, to create safe, peaceful and connected communities.

Tenants will be at the heart of decisions and we will offer people more choice in how they engage with us as well as how they access our services.

We will deliver our vision for our communities against a backdrop of significant external challenges, not least of all the impact of Welfare Reform, digital exclusion, rising levels of poverty, continuing public spending cuts and the continuing gap between housing need and supply.

We also recognise the challenges our customers are facing in this Covid-19 era and we believe we are ideally placed, working alongside our partners, to support them and play a strong role in a fair and socially just economic recovery. This will encompass a clear commitment to supporting customers to **improve their health and wellbeing**, which may have been adversely affected during the pandemic.

By 2026, we know that the expectations of our customers and our staff will be very different. We will evolve how we work, listening and responding so that WLHP remains in the best possible shape to deliver on its ambitions.

A particular challenge unique to WLHP, is to develop an understanding of our new stock and customer profile as WLHP recently became landlord to transferring Barony tenants. Care provision and shared living accommodation is new to WLHP and we will draw upon the expertise within our current staff compliment and colleagues in Wheatley Care to assist with this. The Barony assets are of a different house type/age profile and will have additional and accelerated investment carried out as part of the transfer proposal.

At the heart of our strategy for 2021 to 2026 are five strategic themes:

- › Delivering exceptional customer experience
- › Making the most of our homes and assets
- › Changing lives and communities
- › Developing our shared capability
- › Enabling our ambitions.

OUR VISION – WLHP IN 2026

Our vision is to enable our customers to reach their potential for a brighter future for themselves and their families. Our strategy for making this real will deliver an unprecedented shift in the balance of power and control towards our customers, empowering them to make their own choices about the services they want, ensuring they are properly equipped to do things for themselves and involving them in the design of products and services from start to finish.

We will deliver this vision through five strategic themes, under which we have defined 16 strategic outcomes. These are summarised below.

<p>Our purpose: Making Homes and Lives Better</p>				
<p>Our vision: Customers have increased control over their services, their communities and their lives, with new opportunities for building skills and resilience.</p> <p>We will work ethically and sustainably, ensuring our homes are affordable for our customers, digitally enabled and low or net-zero carbon. We will share our expertise and work with others to improve the fabric of our customers' lives while creating great communities.</p>				
<p>Strategic themes:</p>				
Delivering exceptional customer experience	Making the most of our homes and assets	Changing lives and communities	Developing our shared capability	Enabling our ambitions
<p>Strategic outcomes:</p>				
<p>Progressing from excellent to outstanding</p> <p>Enabling customers to lead</p> <p>Developing a customer led repairs service</p>	<p>Increasing the supply of new homes</p> <p>Investing in existing homes and environments</p> <p>Setting the benchmark for sustainability and reducing carbon footprint</p> <p>Building community voice, engagement and resilience</p>	<p>Developing peaceful and connected neighbourhoods</p> <p>Supporting economic resilience in our communities</p>	<p>W.E. Think – creating our “Think Yes Together” culture</p> <p>W.E. Create – driving innovation</p> <p>W.E. Work – strengthening the skills and agility of our staff</p>	<p>Raising the funding to support our ambitions</p> <p>Maintaining a strong credit rating and managing financial risks</p> <p>Evolving digital platforms to support our activities</p> <p>Influencing locally and nationally to benefit our communities.</p>

These themes and outcomes align the strategic priorities across our Group. The particular priorities of WLHP's strategy for 2021-26 are detailed in the following sections of this document under each strategic theme.

The delivery of our outcomes will be assessed through a series of key performance indicators and impact measures. These will demonstrate our progress towards the outcomes throughout the life of the strategy.

Performance indicators will be measured and monitored on a regular basis. These are detailed below each of the relevant themes within this document. The impact measures will quantify our societal and economic impact and provide evidence of statements made in the strategy. These will generally require periodic evaluation studies to assess the results. Our impact measures relate to the following key areas:

- **Strengthening the Economy** – this will include tracking the significant impact this strategy will make to the Scottish GDP. It is projected by WLHP that the operating and capital spend over the 2021-26 period is estimated to support up to 50 jobs, training places and apprenticeships annually and have a total impact of up to £15m on GDP.
- **Reducing Poverty and Improving Wellbeing** – this will include measuring how we are reducing the cost of running a home and tracking the positive impact of our support services are making to both customers' financial circumstances and overall wellbeing and resilience.
- **Improving our Environment and Mitigating Climate Change** – this will include reducing our corporate carbon footprint to net-zero, reducing the CO2 emissions in our homes and raising the environmental standard of our New Build homes making them more energy efficient and cheaper to run.
- **Strengthening our communities** – this will include increasing customers' social capital, expanding our engagement methods and measuring the positive impact this is making to our customers and our communities. We will also track how our increased community cohesion is helping to make our neighbourhoods more 'peaceful'.



Our values:

- **Excellence** – we raise the bar ...in everything we do
- **Community** – people direct what we do ...and together we build strong communities
- **Ambition** – we push the boundaries in new ways ...so everyone can fulfil their potential
- **Trust** – we inspire customers and staff ...to shape the future.

1. DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Excellence is embedded in WLHP culture and we want to build on this foundation of excellence to deliver even more outstanding services.

Our vision is that services will be easy to access and feel seamless for our customers. We'll have a renewed focus on their overall 'experience' with us, seeking to maintain our existing high levels of customer satisfaction.

Following our past success in achieving top quartile performance, we will work with our customers to define what 'outstanding' service means to them now and what it will mean in future. Understanding what creates value for our customers will help us improve services and track the impact of changes we make for individuals and communities.

We will prioritise services which mean the most to customers and engage with customer groups who tell us they are less satisfied so we better understand their needs.

We want to offer quick resolutions to issues which affect how satisfied people feel with our services. That's why we'll build engagement channels into the development of services so that we capture and respond to customer feedback.

Analysis shows that families tend to be less satisfied as they struggle to deal with competing demands on their time and money so we will develop a Whole Family Approach to support them through every stage of life.

Our new **Whole Family Approach** is focused on improving outcomes for WLHP families. Children and young people will become part of decision-making in our neighbourhoods, such as capturing opinions and ideas on what a safe community looks like to them. In our homes, we'll look to develop more child-friendly features such as better storage for family equipment. New-build homes will be designed to suit modern family living. As children grow we will support families with employment and training opportunities through the Wheatley Foundation. Young adult children in our homes will be offered a housing options consultation as they consider setting up their own home.

We will drive digital transformation to deliver innovative solutions to issues facing WLHP and our customers, building thriving customer communities online as well as in the real world.

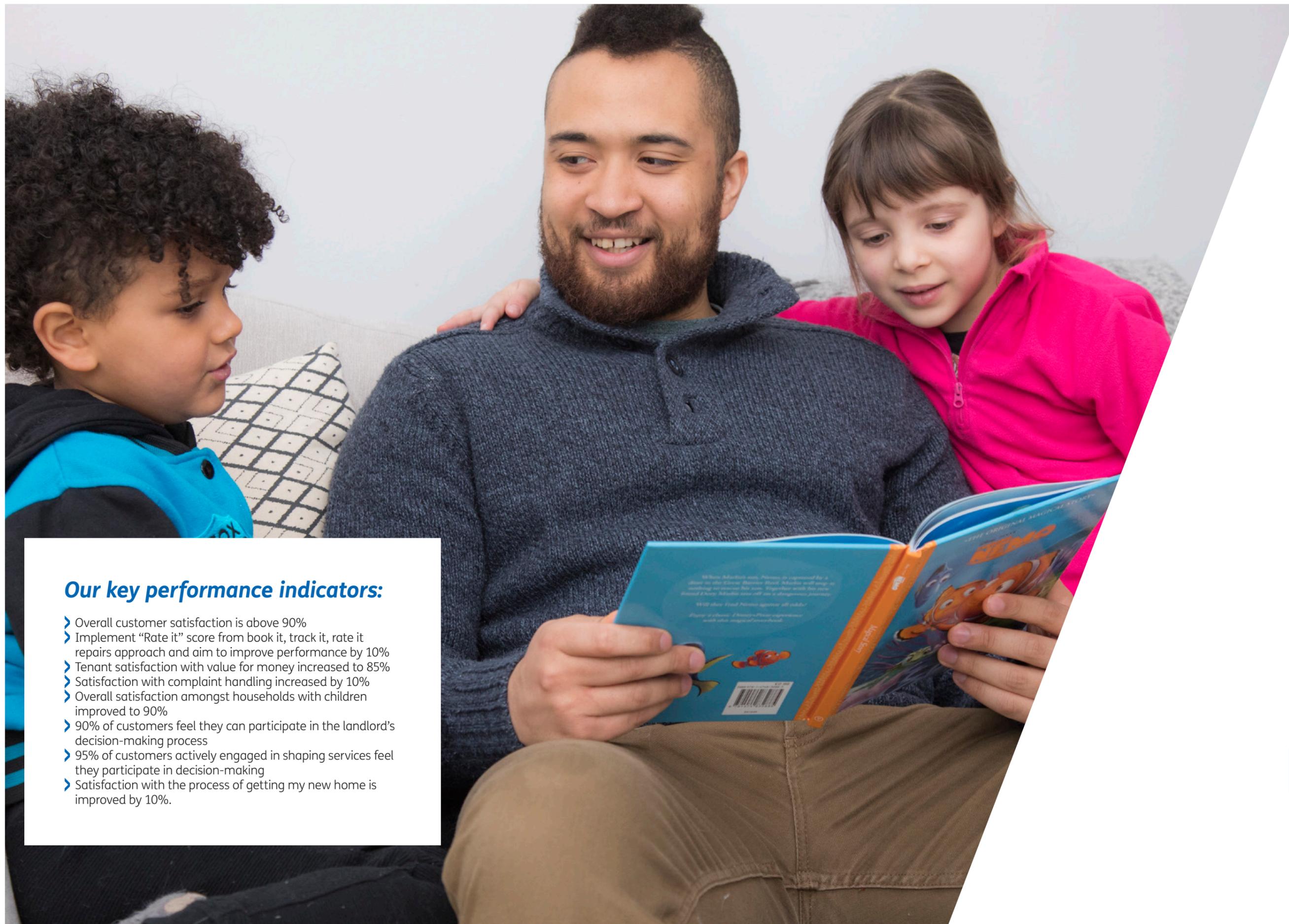
Our digital-based services, such as **GoMobile** and **MyHousing**, will continue to help us strengthen our customer insight, ensuring we can meet the different needs of customers. We will work with partners across West Lothian and nationally to anticipate the profile and demography of our future customers as well as the issues they will face in 2026 and beyond.

We will re-design the way we engage with customers, taking into account the lessons learned whilst working through the Covid-19 pandemic. Enabling them to have more choices and control to make changes that are important to them. Co-designing the transformation of our services with our customers will ensure no one is left behind. Services will be tailored to meet the specific needs of customer groups, whether they are delivered digitally or face to face. We will encourage a diverse range of customers to talk about their experiences and the issues that matter to them and will encourage our customers to challenge our performance and outcomes.

Our co-design process will focus on the key customer journeys of repairs, allocations, complaints and anti-social behaviour.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **delivering exceptional customer experience** through the following key performance indicators and impact measures.





Our key performance indicators:

- › Overall customer satisfaction is above 90%
- › Implement “Rate it” score from book it, track it, rate it repairs approach and aim to improve performance by 10%
- › Tenant satisfaction with value for money increased to 85%
- › Satisfaction with complaint handling increased by 10%
- › Overall satisfaction amongst households with children improved to 90%
- › 90% of customers feel they can participate in the landlord’s decision-making process
- › 95% of customers actively engaged in shaping services feel they participate in decision-making
- › Satisfaction with the process of getting my new home is improved by 10%.

2. MAKING THE MOST OF OUR HOMES AND ASSETS

Our primary purpose of changing lives through providing quality homes remains unchanged. Building on the unparalleled success of the last five years we have set ourselves another challenging target. We will deliver a minimum of 310 new homes between 2021 and 2026; with the potential for a further 350 subject to agreement from the Group's lenders to support an increased level of private finance and the availability of government grant funding.

Improving our existing customers' homes remains a key strategic priority. We will use our financial strengths to invest a further £2.8m over the next five years in improving, modernising and maintaining homes, in addition to £3.5m on repairs. This will allow us to reduce the levels of emergency, reactive and maintenance repairs which create inconvenience to our customers as well as being poor value for money.

The safety and security of customers will continue to be of paramount importance.

Our new engagement framework, **"Stronger Voices, Stronger Communities"** will place the customer at the heart of how we plan and design our improvement programme and new-build developments. We will maximise the use of technology to engage a diverse range of customers across our geographical footprint in both the investment planning process and the development of our new homes. We will help customers to both design and visualise their new kitchen or bathroom. When pre-allocating our new homes customers will be able to decide on kitchen preferences and finishes to interior décor.

We will harness technology to make home life more convenient for our customers and to support people to live independently for as long as possible.

Our new operating model, combined with increased levels of digital and online customer engagement, will provide scope for us to look at how we connect our office spaces. Agile working patterns are more suited to touch-down points rather than assigned desk spaces. This will enable us to generate new opportunities for supporting entrepreneurship in our communities by working in partnership to deliver flexible spaces that can be shared with customers, social enterprises and new local businesses. We will work in partnership with West Lothian Council and other partner agencies to have access to meeting places in each of the communities we serve.

We will ensure our people are equipped with the skills and confidence they need to successfully make this transition and will develop ways of working so that no staff member feels isolated or unsupported due to more flexible working patterns.

A warm, safe and energy efficient home in the right location is a life changing experience for a household that can transform health and well-being, educational attainment and life opportunities. Over the next five years our ambition is to make a giant leap forward on our journey towards our long term aims of becoming carbon neutral and eliminating fuel poverty. Through our investment programme we will continue to replace less efficient boilers and heating systems to be more cost effective for our customers as well as remaining with the service offering of our fuel advisors to ensure our customers are always getting the best deal.

The wider social and economic benefits from increased house building activity are well documented and the continuing scale of our programme will deliver significant benefits in employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities for our customers and communities.

Our **Wheatley 24** homes will be highly adaptable and can easily change as the needs of the household evolves. This means homes will support people at all stages of life creating truly 'lifetime homes'.

In addition to the added value this brings to our customers, it will deliver significant business benefits, including reducing tenancy turnover and future-proofing our homes against changing demographics. We will work with innovative development partners to ensure our house types evolve, and that they are sustainable, connected and intelligent homes for the future. They will be built as efficiently as possible with the most limited impact on the environment.

Our new engagement framework will encourage customers to help shape initial house designs and offer opportunities to stay connected throughout the project. This approach will place the customer at the heart of how we plan and design our new-build developments. We will adopt the same approach and principles for major improvement programmes.

Tackling fuel poverty, improving energy-efficiency and mitigating increases in energy costs for our customer base continues to be key. We will prioritise

solutions for electrically heated homes that enhance control and cost savings for customers, and draw on external research to solve long-standing challenges for improving energy efficiency in non-standard construction types.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **making the most of our homes and assets** through the following key performance indicators.





Our key performance indicators:

- › Develop up to 660 new homes across all tenures
- › Invest £53.3m of new public and private finance in new build housing
- › 95% of customers satisfied with their new-build home
- › Invest £2.8m in improving, modernising and maintaining homes
- › Achieve a 60:40 ratio of planned to reactive repairs
- › Reduce the volume of emergency repairs by 10%
- › Maintain existing tenant satisfaction with the quality of their home at over 90%.



3. CHANGING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

By 2026, we want our customers and our communities to be more resilient. Many of our customers and communities face multiple challenges that have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as financial hardship, working in sectors disproportionately economically impacted by the pandemic and poor mental health.

Through the Wheatley Foundation, our Care services and Wheatley 360, we provide a portfolio of wrap-around services and opportunities which help change WLHP tenants and their families' lives and encourage individuals not just to harbour aspirations but also to realise them. The **Wheatley Works** programme will continue to grow, helping customers into jobs, training or apprenticeships and our Wheatley bursaries programme will support customers to attend higher education.

The pandemic has further heightened the national policy focus on homelessness. Through our new **Strategic Homelessness Framework**, we will take a leading role in the national agenda around Rapid Rehousing and Housing First for those who have been homeless, supporting the Scottish Government and local authorities in their plans.

We will increase the amount of our homes that go to those who are already homeless. We will ensure that we do this in a way which builds the strength and resilience of the new households and the surrounding community. Our work with people who have lived experience of homelessness to map their customer journeys will be used to direct our services in the way which works best for this customer group and the wraparound services they need. The insight this provides will help us lead the way in strengthening the pathways for homeless people to ensure they can access the support they need easily and at the time they need it.

New for WLHP will be the Livingwell model – we will support our older tenants to be as active and independent as possible. We will work as enablers to allow people to use their skills to support others. Our existing Group services including our close links with Care and Wheatley 360 will be maximised to deliver support to older people. Our first Livingwell model will be our development in Almondvale, Livingston and for the first time WLHP will be able to help older customers live independently in their home for longer

and enjoy being part of a great community. We will also be working with our colleagues in Wheatley Care to re-provision our shared living accommodation. This will enable customers to receive personalised support within independent living.

Over the last five years we worked with our customers and communities to ensure our neighbourhoods are peaceful and places customers are proud to live. Using both online and offline platforms and approaches, we will support local engagement and encourage customers to work together to design local solutions in response to local priorities building resilience, skills and confidence so people can make things happen for themselves. Our **Community Improvement Partnership** approach will take communities from being safe, to ones which are improving, peaceful and with continued high levels of satisfaction.

This will be based on building a confidence cycle with communities which will support communities to become more resilient through increased confidence to report crimes and other issues. In turn, this will help WLHP and our partners to make customers feel safe in their neighbourhood, and communities stronger and more peaceful. A key focus will be building on our close links with Police and NETS colleagues with planned 'patch visits'. This will be supplemented by our high quality environmental services and our strong focus on best quality fire safety provisions which will help to reduce the incidence of fires.

Building on our Locality Planning approach, we will take a lead role in influencing other organisations and agencies in the interests of our customers. This will involve establishing common objectives, agreed and co-ordinated approaches, shared data and common indicators of success.

Our bespoke customer engagement events identified that loneliness is a real issue for many people across West Lothian. Our aim will be to put the 'Neighbour' back into our neighbourhoods, creating a modern version of 'Neighbourliness' as a hallmark of our communities by 2026. We will seek to co-create opportunities with a focus on supporting families, young people and overcoming isolation across the generations. Digital neighbourhoods will provide a virtual forum where our customers can connect to further support each other and co-create local solutions to improve their local community. Our forum

will provide an easy location for people to advertise community events and help increase the use of key community spaces.

We will work with communities to co-create a 'Place Measure' that reflects the criteria our customers identify as the hallmarks of a successful and resilient community. We have listened to our customers and we recognise the importance of connectivity for communities, and we will work to influence the improvement of transport infrastructure and services for our communities. We will use **Voice of the Customer** real-time digital feedback to track the impact and progress of all our new developments, when we carry out major investment work, and for Wheatley Foundation activities.

Involving customers in co-designing with us will ensure our services are tailored to meet the needs of particular groups, whether they are delivered digitally or face to face. Designing our digital services to ensure they feel personal will be crucial for ensuring our customers continue to feel we care about them and they have a strong connection with us even though engagement is through digital channels.

Extending our Outcomes Star approach from care into housing will shift the balance of power and control to the customer and ensures the service they experience is personalised based on what is most important to them.

Our new engagement framework will include an innovative community led development approach, involving our customers and wider communities in decision making at all the key stages of our work, whether it be new-build, in existing housing or around service development. As we move through key project milestones we will provide regular opportunities for communities and customers to re-engage, stimulating deeper and richer connection with the communities that we are investing in.

Tenant Control of Expenditure – we will be open and transparent about how we are spending customers' money at both an individual and a community level, providing relevant performance information for customers to hold us accountable, and enabling customers to engage more meaningfully in decision making around repairs.

Our refined 'Community Benefit Model' will involve engaging our customers and communities in identifying and prioritising the type of community benefits they most want to see derived from our investment in existing homes and new-build housing projects. We will continue to use our procurement frameworks to drive wider community benefits with our suppliers in order to expand the 'Wheatley Benefit for Customers' providing them with a growing range of opportunities through the MySavings rewards gateway to save money and reduce the cost of running their home.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **changing lives and communities** through the following key performance indicators.





Our key performance indicators:

- › Meet the agreed contributions to accommodation for homeless households in each local authority we operate in
- › Over 70% of our customers live in neighbourhoods categorised as peaceful
- › Achieve 85% satisfaction with Wheatley Environmental Services
- › Reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires by 10%
- › 100% of applicable properties have a fire risk assessment
- › Over 20 jobs, training and apprenticeships delivered
- › Five customers supported by Wheatley bursaries to attend higher education and university
- › 175 vulnerable children benefit from targeted Foundation programmes
- › 60% of tenants with online accounts are using the MySavings rewards gateway.



4. DEVELOPING OUR SHARED CAPABILITY



During 2020 we made significant progress in reshaping our operating model as we moved to deliver services using a blended approach of face to face and virtual engagement with our customers. Our staff have risen to this challenge remarkably and during the life of this strategy, we will continue to invest in our people to ensure they have the exceptional skills, attitude, engagement and influence to excel in this new, increasingly virtual working environment.

Our unique Think Yes culture inspires staff to develop innovative solutions and build insightful, trusting relationships with customers and communities. By 2026 our culture will have evolved still further under our **W.E. Think** approach so that our customers will increasingly be 'thinking yes' for themselves. As a result of our **'Think Yes Together'** culture, we will transform our culture and our thinking in order to create value for customers in different ways as they increasingly self-serve and do more for themselves.

The success of our transition towards self-directed services will require significant skill and capacity building for both staff and customers: our shared capability. As our service offerings change, the skill sets required to deliver them will also change. At the same time, building the capacity of our customers and

communities over the next five years will be equally important in bringing about the new empowering relationship we are seeking to establish with them. We will measure both staff and customers on 'distance travelled', linked to our outcomes-based approach and showing the impact our staff make for their customers.

W.E. Create will drive innovation across all aspects of our business and in our communities. WLHP's tenants and communities will benefit from the creation of a Community Academy, taking the Academy on the road and into the heart of our communities with both virtual and physical spaces for innovation and learning. Creating environments and opportunities for our staff and customers to learn together will re-enforce our Think Yes Together culture. By 2026, our Community Academy will:

- ▶ **embed customer driven learning, ensuring learning is designed with customer involvement**
- ▶ **focus on building individual capacity to help customers prepare for the world of work**
- ▶ **bring access to Wheatley Scholarships and apprenticeships to our customers' doorstep**
- ▶ **provide opportunities for customers to come into our business and get work experience through a Wheatley Customer Work Experience programme.**

W.E. Work will deliver the transformational changes to our roles and operating model required to ensure this Strategy is delivered. For example, by 2026 our customer-facing roles will have evolved to include developing relationships of trust online, building the capacity of customers to do things for themselves, helping communities have a stronger voice, linking people with their neighbours/ into activities and engaging with influence.



We anticipate the workforce of 2026 will be significantly different from the workforce of today; fully digital and increasingly looking for more flexible career models, work arrangements, reward programmes and career development opportunities. Up to 75% of our workforce will no longer work a traditional Monday to Friday pattern by 2026. Our aim is to deliver a gradual and smooth transition towards a new workforce model that is more agile in responding efficiently to changes in customer requirements. We will:

- ▶ **explore opportunities for co-designing modern employment terms and conditions and working practices that appeal to our evolving workforce and ensure maximum flexibility to meet changing needs**
- ▶ **re-design our work roles, rationalising and professionalising the number to no more than 25 to reflect the creativity and agility of our staff to deliver our vision**
- ▶ **introduce a new career marketplace platform, putting staff in control of managing their own career and encouraging leaders to share talent for the benefit of the business**
- ▶ **value staff who are highly skilled in building and managing relationships and have the capacity to lead creative outcomes.**

In addition, we will work to improve the diversity of our workforce.

Our Future 250 programme will provide a sought-after route for young people across Group to develop their talent, attracting an external talent pipeline for our evolving business requirements. Each year, a cohort will be identified and provided with structured opportunities to move around the business to build their skills and experience portfolio, honing their talents and demonstrating their potential. At WLHP we will encourage young people in our communities to engage with this programme and we will provide opportunities for those on the programme.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **developing our shared capability** through the following key performance indicators.





Our key performance indicators:

- Over 90% of staff say they feel appreciated for the work they do
- Staff absence is maintained at below 3%
- Staff turnover remains at less than 7%
- Over 80% of customer's self-report positive distance travelled towards 'self-reliance'
- 40% of promoted posts filled with internal candidates.

In addition to the above WLHP specific KPIs, WLHP will also contribute to and monitor against the following Group-wide KPIs:

- Our workforce's demographic makeup more closely resembles that of the communities in which we operate
- 50 graduates provided with opportunities to work and gain experience in our sectors
- 250 young people provided with structured opportunities to build their skills within the business.



5. ENABLING OUR AMBITIONS



The funding platforms we put in place provide a strong basis to raise the funding to support our ambitions. However, new facilities will be required in the latter years of the strategy period and we will look to bond, bank and other potential sources to identify the most advantageous options. Access to Scottish Government grant, which was such a vital element of the new-build programme we delivered from 2015-20, will continue to be key to our ambitions.

Our continuing focus on social rented housing, supported by Scottish Government subsidy, will help in our objective to maintain a strong credit rating and manage financial risks. We will test our business plan against a set of financial golden rules and ensure we have mitigating actions ready to address a wide range of adverse scenarios and stresses.

By 2026 WLHP's customers and staff will become **the most digitally enabled in Scotland**. Our evolving digital platforms will help to support our activities and provide a rich portal for customers to draw down services, save money on fuel bills, interact with their community and tap into a host of other benefits. Importantly, the transition that our customers and staff make to self-managed services must be both successful and sustainable as well as being based on offerings that fundamentally improve services beyond that which is possible in an off-line environment. To achieve this, we will optimise digital channels for customers to drive positive engagement and give them finger-tip access to the data they need to make informed decisions.

Technology and digital innovation will also augment the work that is done by people in the organisation. Creating a single source of trusted, secure information for all core front line staff will ensure our decision-making is informed in real time and that our decisions strategically, tactically and operationally are intelligence led.

To support our ambitions and ensure that our investments are properly focused on those areas that will realise both customer and business value, we will continue to mature our model for assessing digital investment to consider strategic fit, complexity, risk, people and quality measures as well as financial considerations. We will explore opportunities to measure the progress in our digital maturity against others in our sector and beyond.

Our success over the last five years has ensured Wheatley has been accepted and recognised as a force for good in Scotland. Building on these strong foundations, WLHP is well positioned to confidently and deliberately take a leading role on the UK and international stage influencing locally and nationally to benefit our communities.

Over the next five years we will also adopt an international dimension to our search for best practice. Identifying and exploring different ways of working and solutions developed across a broader range of contexts will stimulate and inform our thinking. This will enhance our international profile and reputation through showcasing our own role-model approaches across the world.

Our staff will increasingly be recognised as thought leaders and practice experts in their particular discipline. Staff will increasingly liaise with, inform and influence strategic decision makers in Scotland through membership of committees and advisory groups.

As part of our evolving business intelligence approach we will map and maintain strategic profiles across our existing and potential future footprint. This will ensure we systematically identify new opportunities for growth and partnership working to maximum effect.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **enabling our ambitions** through the following key performance indicators.



Our key performance indicators:

- Limit rent increases to 2.9% throughout the life of the strategy
- Maintain gross rent arrears below 4%
- Average days to let a home maintained at less than 14 days
- Over 50% of customers actively using their online account to transact with WLHP.

In addition to the above WLHP specific KPIs, WLHP will also contribute to and monitor against the following Group-wide KPIs:

- Maintain a strong investment credit rating of A+ stable.



Our values are what unites everyone at Wheatley



www.wlhp.org
www.wheatley-group.com

Wheatley Group, Wheatley House
25 Cochrane street, GLASGOW G1 1HL

Your Home, Your Community, Your Future



2021-2026



WLHP part of Wheatley Group
Our five-year strategy



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OUR VISION FOR 2021 TO 2026

WLHP, part of Wheatley Group, is rooted in its local communities and committed to delivering outstanding, customer-focused services.

Your Home, Your Community, Your Future, sets out how we will take our services to the next level on this, the next stage of our journey, from 2021 to 2026.

An ambitious new-build programme has seen us work closely with our key partners, West Lothian Council and the Scottish Government, to bring forward hundreds of much-needed new affordable homes. Over the lifetime of this strategy we will build up to 660 more homes while continuing to invest in the fabric of our existing homes.

But our mission is, and always will be, focused on much more than just bricks and mortar. **“Better homes, better lives”**, is what guides us now, and as we look to the next five years.

Having the keys to one of our homes will continue to lead to a new world of opportunity. We will remain committed to helping people break down the barriers, too often created by disadvantage and poverty. That will include offering people in our homes real opportunities – such as jobs and training – to improve their lives and have more control over what happens in their area. We will also work with our partners and tenants, to create safe, peaceful and connected communities.

Tenants will be at the heart of decisions and we will offer people more choice in how they engage with us as well as how they access our services.

We will deliver our vision for our communities against a backdrop of significant external challenges, not least of all the impact of Welfare Reform, digital exclusion, rising levels of poverty, continuing public spending cuts and the continuing gap between housing need and supply.

We also recognise the challenges our customers are facing in this Covid-19 era and we believe we are ideally placed, working alongside our partners, to support them and play a strong role in a fair and socially just economic recovery. This will encompass a clear commitment to supporting customers to **improve their health and wellbeing**, which may have been adversely affected during the pandemic.

By 2026, we know that the expectations of our customers and our staff will be very different. We will evolve how we work, listening and responding so that WLHP remains in the best possible shape to deliver on its ambitions.

A particular challenge unique to WLHP, is to develop an understanding of our new stock and customer profile as WLHP recently became landlord to transferring Barony tenants. Care provision and shared living accommodation is new to WLHP and we will draw upon the expertise within our current staff compliment and colleagues in Wheatley Care to assist with this. The Barony assets are of a different house type/age profile and will have additional and accelerated investment carried out as part of the transfer proposal.

At the heart of our strategy for 2021 to 2026 are five strategic themes:

- Delivering exceptional customer experience
- Making the most of our homes and assets
- Changing lives and communities
- Developing our shared capability
- Enabling our ambitions.

OUR VISION – WLHP IN 2026

Our vision is to enable our customers to reach their potential for a brighter future for themselves and their families. Our strategy for making this real will deliver an unprecedented shift in the balance of power and control towards our customers, empowering them to make their own choices about the services they want, ensuring they are properly equipped to do things for themselves and involving them in the design of products and services from start to finish.

We will deliver this vision through five strategic themes, under which we have defined 16 strategic outcomes. These are summarised below.

Our purpose:

Making Homes and Lives Better

Our vision:

Customers have increased control over their services, their communities and their lives, with new opportunities for building skills and resilience.

We will work ethically and sustainably, ensuring our homes are affordable for our customers, [digitally enabled and low or net-zero carbon](#). We will share our expertise and work with others to improve the fabric of our customers' lives while creating great communities.

Strategic themes:

- Delivering exceptional customer experience
- Making the most of our homes and assets
- Changing lives and communities
- Developing our shared capability
- Enabling our ambitions

Strategic outcomes:

- Progressing from excellent to outstanding
- Enabling customers to lead
- Developing a customer led repairs service
- Increasing the supply of new homes
- Investing in existing homes and environments
- Setting the benchmark for sustainability and reducing carbon footprint
- Building community voice, engagement and resilience
- Developing peaceful and connected neighbourhoods
- Supporting economic resilience in our communities
- W.E. Think – creating our “Think Yes Together” culture
- W.E. Create – driving innovation
- W.E. Work – strengthening the skills and agility of our staff
- Raising the funding to support our ambitions
- Maintaining a strong credit rating and managing financial risks

- Evolving digital platforms to support our activities
- Influencing locally and nationally to benefit our communities

These themes and outcomes align the strategic priorities across our Group. The particular priorities of WLHP's strategy for 2021-26 are detailed in the following sections of this document under each strategic theme.

The delivery of our outcomes will be assessed through a series of key performance indicators and impact measures. These will demonstrate our progress towards the outcomes throughout the life of the strategy.

Performance indicators will be measured and monitored on a regular basis. These are detailed below each of the relevant themes within this document. The impact measures will quantify our societal and economic impact and provide evidence of statements made in the strategy. These will generally require periodic evaluation studies to assess the results. Our impact measures relate to the following key areas:

- **Strengthening the Economy** – this will include tracking the significant impact this strategy will make to the Scottish GDP. It is projected by WLHP that the operating and capital spend over the 2021-26 period is estimated to support up to 50 jobs, training places and apprenticeships annually and have a total impact of up to £15m on GDP.
- **Reducing Poverty and Improving Wellbeing** – this will include measuring how we are reducing the cost of running a home and tracking the positive impact of our support services are making to both customers' financial circumstances and overall wellbeing and resilience.
- **Improving our Environment and Mitigating Climate Change** – this will include reducing our corporate carbon footprint to net-zero, reducing the CO2 emissions in our Wheatley homes and raising the environmental standard of our New Build homes making them more energy efficient and cheaper to run.
- **Strengthening our communities** – this will include increasing customers' social capital, expanding our engagement methods and measuring the positive impact this is making to our customers and our communities. We will also track how our increased community cohesion is helping to make our neighbourhoods more 'peaceful'.

Our values:

- Excellence – we raise the bar in everything we do
- Community – people direct what we do and together we build strong communities
- Ambition – we push the boundaries in new ways so everyone can fulfil their potential
- Trust – we inspire customers and staff to shape the future.

1.DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Excellence is embedded in WLHP culture and we want to build on this foundation of excellence to deliver even more outstanding services.

Our vision is that services will be easy to access and feel seamless for our customers. We'll have a renewed focus on their overall 'experience' with us, seeking to maintain our existing high levels of customer satisfaction.

Following our past success in achieving top quartile performance, we will work with our customers to define what 'outstanding' service means to them now and what it will mean in future. Understanding what creates value for our customers will help us improve services and track the impact of changes we make for individuals and communities.

We will prioritise services which mean the most to customers and engage with customer groups who tell us they are less satisfied so we better understand their needs.

We want to offer quick resolutions to issues which affect how satisfied people feel with our services. That's why we'll build engagement channels into the development of services so that we capture and respond to customer feedback.

Analysis shows that families tend to be less satisfied as they struggle to deal with competing demands on their time and money so we will develop a Whole Family Approach to support them through every stage of life.

Our new **Whole Family Approach** is focused on improving outcomes for WLHP families. Children and young people will become part of decision-making in our neighbourhoods, such as capturing opinions and ideas on what a safe community looks like to them. In our homes, we'll look to develop more child-friendly features such as better storage for family equipment. New-build homes will be designed to suit modern family living. As children grow we will support families with employment and training opportunities through the Wheatley Foundation. Young adult children in our homes will be offered a housing options consultation as they consider setting up their own home.

We will drive digital transformation to deliver innovative solutions to issues facing WLHP and our customers, building thriving customer communities online as well as in the real world.

Our digital-based services, such as GoMobile and MyHousing, will continue to help us strengthen our customer insight, ensuring we can meet the different needs of customers. We will work with partners across the city and nationally to anticipate the profile and demography of our future customers as well as the issues they will face in 2026 and beyond.

We will re-design the way we engage with customers, [taking into account the lessons learned whilst working through the Covid-19 pandemic](#). Enabling them to have more choices and control to make changes that are important to them. Co-designing the transformation of our services with our customers will ensure no one is left behind. Services

will be tailored to meet the specific needs of customer groups, whether they are delivered digitally or face to face. We will encourage a diverse range of customers to talk about their experiences and the issues that matter to them and will encourage our customers to challenge our performance and outcomes.

Our co-design process will focus on the key customer journeys of repairs, allocations, complaints and anti-social behaviour.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **delivering exceptional customer experience** through the following key performance indicators and impact measures.

Our key performance indicators:

- Overall customer satisfaction is above 90%
- Implement "Rate it" score from book it, track it, rate it repairs approach and aim to improve performance by 10%
- Tenant satisfaction with value for money increased to 85%
- Satisfaction with complaint handling increased by 10%
- Overall satisfaction amongst households with children improved to 90%
- 90% of customers feel they can participate in the landlord's decision-making process
- 95% of customers actively engaged in shaping services feel they participate in decision-making
- Satisfaction with the process of getting my new home is improved by 10%

2. MAKING THE MOST OF OUR HOMES AND ASSETS

Our primary purpose of changing lives through providing quality homes remains unchanged. Building on the unparalleled success of the last five years we have set ourselves another challenging target. We will deliver a minimum of 310 new homes between 2021 and 2026; with the potential for a further 350 subject to agreement from the Group's lenders to support an increased level of private finance and the availability of government grant funding.

Improving our existing customers' homes remains a key strategic priority. We will use our financial strengths to invest a further £2.8m over the next five years in improving, modernising and maintaining homes, in addition to £3.5m on repairs. This will allow us to reduce the levels of emergency, reactive and maintenance repairs which create inconvenience to our customers as well as being poor value for money.

The safety and security of customers will continue to be of paramount importance.

Our new engagement framework, **"Stronger Voices, Stronger Communities"** will place the customer at the heart of how we plan and design our improvement programme and new-build developments. We will maximise the use of technology to engage a diverse range of customers across our geographical footprint in both the investment planning process and the development of our new homes. We will help customers to both design and visualise their new kitchen or bathroom. When pre-allocating our new homes customers will be able to decide on kitchen preferences and finishes to interior décor.

We will harness technology to make home life more convenient for our customers and to support people to live independently for as long as possible.

Our new operating model, combined with increased levels of digital and online customer engagement, will provide scope for us to look at how we connect our office spaces. Agile working patterns are more suited to touch-down points rather than assigned desk spaces. This will enable us to generate new opportunities for supporting entrepreneurship in our communities by working in partnership to deliver flexible spaces that can be shared with customers, social enterprises and new local businesses. We will work in partnership with West Lothian Council and other partner agencies to have access to meeting places in each of the communities we serve.

We will ensure our people are equipped with the skills and confidence they need to successfully make this transition and will develop ways of working so that no staff member feels isolated or unsupported due to more flexible working patterns.

A warm, safe and energy efficient home in the right location is a life changing experience for a household that can transform health and well-being, educational attainment and life opportunities. Over the next five years our ambition is to make a giant leap forward on our journey towards our long term aims of becoming carbon neutral and eliminating fuel poverty. Through our investment programme we will continue to replace less efficient boilers and heating systems to be more cost effective for our customers as well as

remaining with the service offering of our fuel advisors to ensure our customers are always getting the best deal.

The wider social and economic benefits from increased house building activity are well documented and the continuing scale of our programme will deliver significant benefits in employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities for our customers and communities.

Our **Wheatley 24** homes will be highly adaptable and can easily change as the needs of the household evolves. This means homes will support people at all stages of life creating truly 'lifetime homes'.

In addition to the added value this brings to our customers, it will deliver significant business benefits, including reducing tenancy turnover and future-proofing our homes against changing demographics. We will work with innovative development partners to ensure our house types evolve, and that they are sustainable, connected and intelligent homes for the future. They will be built as efficiently as possible with the most limited impact on the environment.

Our new engagement framework will encourage customers to help shape initial house designs and offer opportunities to stay connected throughout the project. This approach will place the customer at the heart of how we plan and design our new-build developments. We will adopt the same approach and principles for major improvement programmes.

Tackling fuel poverty, improving energy-efficiency and mitigating increases in energy costs for our customer base continues to be key. We will prioritise solutions for electrically heated homes that enhance control and cost savings for customers, and draw on external research to solve long-standing challenges for improving energy efficiency in non-standard construction types.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **making the most of our homes and assets** through the following key performance indicators.

Our key performance indicators:

- Develop up to 660 new homes across all tenures
- Invest £53.3m of new public and private finance in new build housing
- 95% of customers satisfied with their new-build home
- Invest £2.8m in improving, modernising and maintaining homes
- Achieve a 60:40 ratio of planned to reactive repairs
- Reduce the volume of emergency repairs by 10%
- Maintain existing tenant satisfaction with the quality of their home at over 90%.

3.CHANGING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

By 2026, we want our customers and our communities to be more resilient. Many of our customers and communities face multiple challenges that have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as financial hardship, working in sectors disproportionately economically impacted by the pandemic and poor mental health.

Through the Wheatley Foundation, our Care services and Wheatley 360, we provide a portfolio of wrap-around services and opportunities which help change WLHP tenants and their families' lives and encourage individuals not just to harbour aspirations but also to realise them. The **Wheatley Works** programme will continue to grow, helping customers into jobs, training or apprenticeships and our Wheatley bursaries programme will support customers to attend higher education.

The pandemic has further heightened the national policy focus on homelessness. Through our new **Strategic Homelessness Framework**, we will take a leading role in the national agenda around Rapid Rehousing and Housing First for those who have been homeless, supporting the Scottish Government and local authorities in their plans.

We will increase the amount of our homes that go to those who are already homeless. We will ensure that we do this in a way which builds the strength and resilience of the new households and the surrounding community. Our work with people who have lived experience of homelessness to map their customer journeys will be used to direct our services in the way which works best for this customer group and the wraparound services they need. The insight this provides will help us lead the way in strengthening the pathways for homeless people to ensure they can access the support they need easily and at the time they need it.

New for WLHP will be the Livingwell model – we will support our older tenants to be as active and independent as possible. We will work as enablers to allow people to use their skills to support others. Our existing Group services including our close links with Care and Wheatley 360 will be maximised to deliver support to older people. Our first Livingwell model will be our development in Almondvale, Livingston and for the first time WLHP will be able to help older customers live independently in their home for longer and enjoy being part of a great community. We will also be working with our colleagues in Wheatley Care to re-provision our shared living accommodation. This will enable customers to receive personalised support within independent living.

Over the last five years we worked with our customers and communities to ensure our neighbourhoods are peaceful and places customers are proud to live. Using both online and offline platforms and approaches, we will support local engagement and encourage customers to work together to design local solutions in response to local priorities building resilience, skills and confidence so people can make things happen for themselves. Our **Community Improvement Partnership** approach will take communities from being safe, to ones which are improving, peaceful and with continued high levels of satisfaction.

This will be based on building a confidence cycle with communities which will support communities to become more resilient through increased confidence to report crimes and other issues. In turn, this will help WLHP and our partners to make customers feel safe in their neighbourhood, and communities stronger and more peaceful. A key focus will be building on our close links with Police and NETS colleagues with planned 'patch visits'. This will be supplemented by our high quality environmental services and our strong focus on best quality fire safety provisions which will help to reduce the incidence of fires.

Building on our Locality Planning approach, we will take a lead role in influencing other organisations and agencies in the interests of our customers. This will involve establishing common objectives, agreed and co-ordinated approaches, shared data and common indicators of success.

Our bespoke customer engagement events identified that loneliness is a real issue for many people across West Lothian. Our aim will be to put the 'Neighbour' back into our neighbourhoods, creating a modern version of 'Neighbourliness' as a hallmark of our communities by 2026. We will seek to co-create opportunities with a focus on supporting families, young people and overcoming isolation across the generations. Digital neighbourhoods will provide a virtual forum where our customers can connect to further support each other and co-create local solutions to improve their local community. Our forum will provide an easy location for people to advertise community events and help increase the use of key community spaces.

We will work with communities to co-create a 'Place Measure' that reflects the criteria our customers identify as the hallmarks of a successful and resilient community. We have listened to our customers and we recognise the importance of connectivity for communities, and we will work to influence the improvement of transport infrastructure and services for our communities. We will use **Voice of the Customer** real-time digital feedback to track the impact and progress of all our new developments, when we carry out major investment work, and for Wheatley Foundation activities.

Involving customers in co-designing with us will ensure our services are tailored to meet the needs of particular groups, whether they are delivered digitally or face to face. Designing our digital services to ensure they feel personal will be crucial for ensuring our customers continue to feel we care about them and they have a strong connection with us even though engagement is through digital channels.

Extending our Outcomes Star approach from care into housing will shift the balance of power and control to the customer and ensures the service they experience is personalised based on what is most important to them.

Our new engagement framework will include an innovative community led development approach, involving our customers and wider communities in decision making at all the key stages of our work, whether it be new-build, in existing housing or around service development. As we move through key project milestones we will provide regular opportunities for communities and customers to re-engage, stimulating deeper and richer connection with the communities that we are investing in.

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We will demonstrate WLHP’s progress towards the outcomes under **changing lives and communities** through the following key performance indicators.

Our key performance indicators:

- Meet the agreed contributions to accommodation for homeless households in each local authority we operate in
- Over 70% of our customers live in neighbourhoods categorised as peaceful
- Achieve 85% satisfaction with Wheatley Environmental Services
- Reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires by 10%
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4. DEVELOPING OURSHARED CAPABILITY

During 2020 we made significant progress in reshaping our operating model as we moved to deliver services using a blended approach of face to face and virtual engagement with our customers. Our staff have risen to this challenge remarkably and during the life of this strategy, we will continue to invest in our people to ensure they have the exceptional skills, attitude, engagement and influence to excel in this new, increasingly virtual working environment.

Our unique Think Yes culture inspires staff to develop innovative solutions and build insightful, trusting relationships with customers and communities. By 2026 our culture will have evolved still further under our **W.E. Think** approach so that our customers will increasingly be 'thinking yes' for themselves. As a result of our '**Think Yes Together**' culture, we will transform our culture and our thinking in order to create value for customers in different ways as they increasingly self-serve and do more for themselves.

The success of our transition towards self-directed services will require significant skill and capacity building for both staff and customers: our shared capability. As our service offerings change, the skill sets required to deliver them will also change. At the same time, building the capacity of our customers and communities over the next five years will be equally important in bringing about the new empowering relationship we are seeking to establish with them. We will measure both staff and customers on 'distance travelled', linked to our outcomes-based approach and showing the impact our staff make for their customers.

W.E. Create will drive innovation across all aspects of our business and in our communities. WLHP's tenants and communities will benefit from the creation of a Community Academy, taking the Academy on the road and into the heart of our communities with both virtual and physical spaces for innovation and learning. Creating environments and opportunities for our staff and customers to learn together will re-enforce our Think Yes Together culture. By 2026, our Community Academy will:

- **embed customer driven learning, ensuring learning is designed with customer involvement**
- **focus on building individual capacity to help customers prepare for the world of work**
- **bring access to Wheatley Scholarships and apprenticeships to our customers' doorstep**
- **provide opportunities for customers to come into our business and get work experience through a Wheatley Customer Work Experience programme.**

W.E. Work will deliver the transformational changes to our roles and operating model required to ensure this Strategy is delivered. For example, by 2026 our customer-facing roles will have evolved to include developing relationships of trust online, building the capacity of customers to do things for themselves, helping communities have a stronger voice, linking people with their neighbours/ into activities and engaging with influence.

We anticipate the workforce of 2026 will be significantly different from the workforce of today; fully digital and increasingly looking for more flexible career models, work arrangements, reward programmes and career development opportunities. Up to 75% of our workforce will no longer work a traditional Monday to Friday pattern by 2026. Our aim is to deliver a gradual and smooth transition towards a new workforce model that is more agile in responding efficiently to changes in customer requirements. We will:

- **explore opportunities for co-designing modern employment terms and conditions and working practices that appeal to our evolving workforce and ensure maximum flexibility to meet changing needs**
- **re-design our work roles, rationalising and professionalising the number to no more than 25 to reflect the creativity and agility of our staff to deliver our vision**
- **introduce a new career marketplace platform, putting staff in control of managing their own career and encouraging leaders to share talent for the benefit of the business**
- **value staff who are highly skilled in building and managing relationships and have the capacity to lead creative outcomes.**

In addition, we will work to improve the [diversity](#) of our workforce.

Our Future 250 programme will provide a sought-after route for young people across Group to develop their talent, attracting an external talent pipeline for our evolving business requirements. Each year, a cohort will be identified and provided with structured opportunities to move around the business to build their skills and experience portfolio, honing their talents and demonstrating their potential. At WLHP we will encourage young people in our communities to engage with this programme and we will provide opportunities for those on the programme.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **developing our shared capability** through the following key performance indicators.

Our key performance indicators:

- Over 90% of staff say they feel appreciated for the work they do
- Staff absence is maintained at below 3%
- Staff turnover remains at less than 7%
- Over 80% of customer's self-report positive distance travelled towards 'self-reliance'
- 40% of promoted posts filled with internal candidates.

In addition to the above WLHP specific KPIs, WLHP will also contribute to and monitor against the following Group-wide KPIs:

- Our workforce's demographic makeup more closely resembles that of the communities in which we operate
- 50 graduates provided with opportunities to work and gain experience in our sectors
- 250 young people provided with structured opportunities to build their skills within the business.

5. ENABLING OUR AMBITIONS

The funding platforms we put in place provide a strong basis to raise the funding to support our ambitions. However, new facilities will be required in the latter years of the strategy period and we will look to bond, bank and other potential sources to identify the most advantageous options. Access to Scottish Government grant, which was such a vital element of the new-build programme we delivered from 2015-20, will continue to be key to our ambitions.

Our continuing focus on social rented housing, supported by Scottish Government subsidy, will help in our objective to maintain a strong credit rating and manage financial risks. We will test our business plan against a set of financial golden rules and ensure we have mitigating actions ready to address a wide range of adverse scenarios and stresses.

By 2026 WLHP's customers and staff will become **the most digitally enabled in Scotland**. Our evolving digital platforms will help to support our activities and provide a rich portal for customers to draw down services, save money on fuel bills, interact with their community and tap into a host of other benefits. Importantly, the transition that our customers and staff make to self-managed services must be both successful and sustainable as well as being based on offerings that fundamentally improve services beyond that which is possible in an off-line environment. To achieve this, we will optimise digital channels for customers to drive positive engagement and give them finger-tip access to the data they need to make informed decisions.

Technology and digital innovation will also augment the work that is done by people in the organisation. Creating a single source of trusted, secure information for all core front line staff will ensure our decision-making is informed in real time and that our decisions strategically, tactically and operationally are intelligence led.

To support our ambitions and ensure that our investments are properly focused on those areas that will realise both customer and business value, we will continue to mature our model for assessing digital investment to consider strategic fit, complexity, risk, people and quality measures as well as financial considerations. We will explore opportunities to measure the progress in our digital maturity against others in our sector and beyond. Our success over the last five years has ensured Wheatley has been accepted and recognised as a force for good in Scotland. Building on these strong foundations, WLHP is well positioned to confidently and deliberately take a leading role on the UK and international stage influencing locally and nationally to benefit our communities.

Over the next five years will also adopt an international dimension to our search for best practice. Identifying and exploring different ways of working and solutions developed across a broader range of contexts will stimulate and inform our thinking. This will enhance our international profile and reputation through showcasing our own role-model approaches across the world.

Our staff will increasingly be recognised as thought leaders and practice experts in their particular discipline. Staff will increasingly liaise with, inform and influence strategic decision makers in Scotland through membership of committees and advisory groups.

As part of our evolving business intelligence approach we will map and maintain strategic profiles across our existing and potential future footprint. This will ensure we systematically identify new opportunities for growth and partnership working to maximum effect.

We will demonstrate WLHP's progress towards the outcomes under **enabling our ambitions** through the following key performance indicators.

Our key performance indicators:

- Limit rent increases to 2.9% throughout the life of the strategy
- Maintain gross rent arrears below 4%
- Average days to let a home maintained at less than 14 days
- Over 50% of customers actively using their online account to transact with WLHP.

In addition to the above WLHP specific KPIs, WLHP will also contribute to and monitor against the following Group-wide KPIs:

- Maintain a strong investment credit rating of A+ stable.

Report

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Lynsey Fotheringham, Head of Housing

Approved by: Olga Clayton, Group Director of Housing & Care

Subject: Staff survey during lockdown, summer 2020

Date: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Board on the results of a survey held in July to assess staff morale during the first four months of lockdown; seek feedback on how they felt they and how customers had been supported; and to collate views and suggestions on how their experiences in the pandemic might influence and shape future ways of working.

2. Authorising context

- 2.1 Under the Group Authorise/Manage/Monitor Matrix, the Group Chief Executive and senior management are responsible for managing performance and any specific regulatory requirements.

3. Risk appetite and assessment

- 3.1 There would have been a risk in not publishing the survey results when a commitment had been given to staff we would do so and in not taking account of the feedback gained in our future planning.

4 Background

- 4.1 The survey was conducted over three weeks on the online platform, Survey Monkey, and was supplemented by telephone interviews and Zoom focus group meetings.
- 4.2 The aim was to collate employee views of their personal experiences of lockdown, our operational and organisational response to the pandemic and to establish staff priorities in the months leading to remobilisation in October. The survey was designed to be qualitative, judging sentiment and the overall emotional reaction to how the Group had looked after the best interests of both them and the people we work for across Scotland. The results were published on the staff intranet, W. E. Connect, earlier this month.

- 4.3 In total, 1071 members of staff completed the online survey online, with 12 submitting responses in writing. All responses were anonymous. There were 58 telephone interviews and six focus group meetings. The focus groups were attended by 46 participants representing all sectors, partners and geographic areas in the Group.
- 4.4 The online survey comprised 11 questions across four subjects:
- people's personal experience of lockdown;
 - how they felt they had been supported, professionally and personally;
 - their perceptions of how customers viewed Wheatley and the services provided during lockdown;
 - and how the lessons learned, experiences shared and investment made might influence and shape future ways of working.

5. Discussion

- 5.1 All answers were reviewed by the Communications Team and summarised under the following key themes (with further detail included at Appendix 1):

Home working

- 5.2 The benefits, issues and challenges of this were raised and discussed extensively in the answers to many questions. Many respondents reported adapting quickly and enjoying the flexibility of working at home, spending more time with family and not having to commute. Issues raised included not having adequate or suitable physical space, internal environment and equipment, increased workloads and difficulty separating work from home. Those with children found it particularly challenging juggling home and work. Most people favoured retaining home working going forward as part of a blended, flexible way of working.

Safety

- 5.3 Not surprisingly, this was a key consideration, particularly for frontline workers and those with vulnerable family members. The vast majority of staff were positive about the safety measures and guidance provided and the Personal Protective Equipment ("PPE") secured, made available and utilised. Maintaining safe working practices was raised repeatedly as a key priority and requirement in all future ways of working.

Customer services and support

- 5.4 It is clear staff are proud of what the Group has done and continues to do in going the extra mile for the people it works for. Question 8 in the online survey enabled staff to outline and discuss the various customer issues they have had to deal with during lockdown.
- 5.5 The home working model was seen to have had a number of benefits in terms of our engagement with customers. Our housing officers, call centre staff and care workers in particular reached out to more customers, some of whom they may have had limited contact with before. As well as phone calls, engagement extended to new methods such as video calls. This helped raise awareness of

the range of services our partner organisations offer, and our proactive approach was welcomed by tenants and people we work for.

Embracing digital

- 5.6 There is a strong sense of people having embraced digital and the online platforms made available. Although there were some I.T. and systems issues in the early days of lockdown, overall, people felt they were ready for the next stage of Wheatley's digital journey. A large number of respondents expressed appreciation of the support received from I.T. colleagues.

Staff well-being

- 5.7 Whilst many reported they had coped well and had even enjoyed elements of their time in lockdown, others talked about loneliness, isolation and their mental health being affected. This emerges in responses across several questions. Being able to return to some form of face-to-face contact and interaction was rated as being very important to many staff.

Work-life balance

- 5.8 This was another recurring theme, with many - particularly those working from home - valuing the flexibility and scope it gave them to achieve a better balance. Some respondents talked about how their work and home lives had merged and workloads increased. Supporting staff to delineate work and home life will be an important part of embedding an element of home working in the longer term across parts of the Group.

Support for staff

- 5.9 The overwhelming view was very positive, with staff appreciating the efforts made to maintain good communications throughout the pandemic, referring to new features on W.E. Connect and initiatives, such as the Daily Uplift good-news report and Family Hub. Others highlighted the excellent support received from the I.T. and Employee Relations teams and the personal support received from their managers and other colleagues. Not unexpectedly, a minority felt more support could have been offered, but over 85% of respondents felt they had been well supported.

Reward and recognition

- 5.10 A significant number of staff highlighted the importance of recognising and rewarding colleagues for their outstanding efforts during the pandemic.

Furlough

- 5.11 Although most staff understood why the Group had participated in the UK Government scheme, some expressed disappointment at being selected. Others believed it had led to more pressure being placed on those still working. Some reported they were enjoying the opportunity to be at home and being able, for example, to look after small children.

Focus group feedback

- 5.12 The Zoom focus groups with staff across the business held at the end of July explored further and in person the key themes identified online and in telephone interviews, including:
- home working and a future blended work model;
 - supporting our customers, and what we've learned;
 - leading and managing in challenging times;
 - and staff support and recognition.
- 5.13 Co-ordinated and run by Communications and Employee Relations staff, these generated lively, honest discussions that underlined how engaged and motivated staff have continued to be during lockdown. A summary report of the feedback is attached at Appendix 2.

6. Key issues and conclusions

- 6.1 The survey of staff has highlighted how important the culture and values of Wheatley have been in enabling the organisation to work effectively during lockdown. The findings have been in line with the observations and discussions in the WLHP team. Our people have felt well supported, both in terms of managerial/leadership guidance and practical working matters such as IT equipment. Our culture of empowering staff to be leaders at all levels meant that the vast majority adapted well to the enforced change, with mutual support and use of new technologies enthusiastically embraced.
- 6.2 An overarching summary plus short summaries of the themes per question were published on W.E. Connect on Friday, 31 July 2020. Analysis of the views expressed and recommendations put forward by the focus groups has also been posted on the intranet.
- 6.3 The Executive Team and Leadership Group have taken on board the survey feedback as they continue to plan remobilisation and design and implement a new, blended way of working and service model. An example of this "you said, we did" approach is the financial awards and additional holidays announced, rewarding and recognising staff who have continued working throughout the pandemic.
- 6.4 The comprehensive qualitative July survey will be followed up later this year by a series of quantitative pulse surveys, emphasising again to staff the importance of their opinions and feedback .

7. Value for money implications

- 7.1 There are no value for money implications.

8. Impact on financial projections

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

- 9.1 There are no specific legal, regulatory or charitable implications.

10. Partnership implications

10.1 There are no partnership implications arising from this report.

11. Implementation and deployment

11.1 Feedback has been shared with Executive Team and Managing Directors to use as they plan and implement future services, working models and office environments.

12. Equalities impact

12.1 All staff were able and encouraged to participate through online and or hard copy access to the survey.

13. Recommendations

13.1 The Board is asked to note the report.

Appendix 1 – Staff survey feedback

Appendix 2 – Staff focus group feedback



Staff Survey

Our experience through lockdown

Summer 2020

1. Introduction

The staff survey was conducted through the online platform Survey Monkey and through telephone interviews in June 2020 and ran for three weeks.

The survey aimed to gather staff views on their experiences in lockdown, Wheatley's response to the pandemic and what our priorities should be going forward into the 'new normal'.

Focus groups are being held throughout July to further explore key themes and the results of these will be published in early August.

A total of 1071 members of staff completed the survey online with a further 12 staff handwriting their responses and 58 phone interviews carried out. All responses were anonymous.

The survey consisted of 11 questions designed to gain feedback around four areas which can be summarised as follows:

- ▶ people's personal experience of lockdown;
- ▶ how people felt they were supported professionally and personally;
- ▶ thoughts on customers' perceptions of our support and services during lockdown; and
- ▶ looking to the future: what might be retained as a new way of working.

2. Analysis

All answers to each of the 11 questions were reviewed by the Communications Team and key themes identified for each question. You can read the key themes in each question in section 4.

Views are many and varied, reflecting the different personal circumstances people found themselves in during lockdown and the breadth of job roles at Wheatley. Nevertheless it was possible in each question to identify key themes based on the most common responses.

3. Most common emerging themes

Looking at all the responses to the questions, both in the survey and the interviews, a number of key themes emerge. These are:

1. Homeworking

The benefits and issues with homeworking are discussed extensively in almost every question by staff. Many report adapting and adjusting quickly and enjoying the flexibility of working at home, having no commute and spending more time with

family. Issues reported include not having the right physical space, environment or equipment, increased workloads and difficulty separating work from home. Those with children have found it particularly challenging and their issues with juggling home and work are discussed repeatedly across the questions. There is a sense that for many people retaining some element of homeworking in future would suit them.

2. Safety

Safety is a key consideration for many, particularly those working on the frontline or who have vulnerable family members. Staff discuss positively the safety measures put in place by Wheatley, including PPE. Continuing to protect the safety of staff and customers emerges as a key priority for Wheatley staff for the future.

3. Support and services for customers

There is a strong sense across the questions of staff feeling pleased and proud of the services and support they have been able to deliver to customers and people we work for during lockdown. In Question 8 staff also discussed some of the customer issues they've had to deal with.

4. Embracing digital

There is a strong sense throughout the responses of people having embraced new digital platforms and of being ready for the next stage of our digital journey. Although people experienced some issues with IT and systems, particularly in the early days, staff are very appreciative of the support received from our IT colleagues.

5. Staff well-being

While some people do report coping well and enjoying elements of their experience in lockdown, others talk about loneliness, isolation and their mental health being affected. Again this emerges as a theme in response to several of the questions. Getting back to some face-to-face contact and interaction is important for many respondents.

6. Work/life balance

Work/life balance is a recurring theme, again with differing views expressed. Many staff, particularly those working from home, report having more flexibility and time, leading to a better work/life balance. Some staff feel their work and home lives have merged, their workloads increased and as a result their work/life balance has been impacted.

7. Support for staff

Responses on support available to staff are overwhelmingly positive with staff appreciating W.E. Connect, including the Daily Uplift and Family Hub, and the support from IT and HR. Some respondents report excellent support from their manager and colleagues, while others felt they needed more.

8. Reward and recognition

A significant number of staff discuss the importance of recognising and rewarding colleagues for their efforts during the pandemic.

9. The furlough scheme

The furlough scheme recurs as an issue with mixed feelings expressed. Many staff understand why Wheatley participated in it but some report disappointment at being selected and others frustration at the increased pressure on teams where staff were furloughed. Some staff report enjoying the opportunity to be at home during lockdown, for example to look after small children, without the challenge of work.

4. Themes by question

Here is a review of the key themes emerging for each question.

Q1 – Describe generally your work/life since lockdown began?

There was a wide range of responses to this question with personal circumstances, job role, family commitments, general outlook and other life factors influencing how people responded.

The most frequently occurring words used to answer this question were:

- › difficult
- › stressful
- › challenging
- › different
- › exhausting/tiring/draining.

A small number of respondents said they had enjoyed the experience.

Key themes

There were 10 key themes emerging from the responses to this question.

1. Lockdown has been a mix of ups and downs

Many people described their experience as being up and down, good days and bad days or a

rollercoaster. Responses appeared to be influenced by what was going on in people's personal lives as much as their working lives.

2. Work and life have been hard to separate

A very common theme among those working from home was a feeling of difficulty in separating work from life. This was particularly prevalent in the first weeks of lockdown although for some it continued.

3. Juggling work with family, particularly children, has been a huge challenge

The challenge of juggling work with children, either from home or on the frontline, was one of the most reoccurring themes.

4. Initially hard but people adjusted/adapted as time went on

Many respondents talked about lockdown as challenging or difficult in the beginning but go on to say they gradually adapted.

5. Feelings of coping and enjoying work and life

Some people however described their experience of lockdown as positive. A range of reasons were given for this including enjoying working from home and the flexibility it gives, the ability to help customers, and the opportunity to do new tasks and learn new skills.

6. Isolation and missing colleagues and interaction

For many the over-riding feeling at the time of the survey was of isolation and missing the interaction of colleagues and the workplace.

7. Long days and increased workloads

Staff from different parts of the business described extra work pressures, increased workloads and longer days.

8. Unsuitability of physical space for work

Some respondents expressed difficulties with the physical aspects of working from home such as lack of space or unsuitable desk/chair or having to operate in a social-distancing environment.

9. Impact on people's mental well-being

While most respondents described the period of lockdown as difficult, challenging or stressful, a small number also talked about it having an impact on their mental health.

10. Furlough – mixed reactions

People on furlough described a wide mix of experiences from feeling guilty and worried to enjoying having the time to spend with family.

Q2 – What has worked well for you during lockdown?

This question asked people to reflect on what had worked well during lockdown. Most respondents were able to cite at least one positive from their experiences, with many highlighting several things which they felt had gone well.

By far the most popular answers were around having more time at home to spend with family or on hobbies such as exercising and gardening. This was particularly so for staff working from home and also for some on furlough. The lack of commute and the flexibility provided by homeworking featured heavily in people's responses.

A significant number reported how effectively IT systems and IT support had worked for them and many talked about embracing new digital platforms such as Skype and Zoom.

Many frontline colleagues felt supporting customers and people we work for had gone well while a number mentioned PPE and other safety measures as having been effective.

There was appreciation among many staff for the support they had received from colleagues, managers and the organisation throughout the difficulties of lockdown. Communications within their team and from the Group was mentioned as part of this support.

A very small minority of respondents said nothing, or not much, had gone well for them throughout lockdown.

Here is a summary of the key themes in this question.

1. More time to do things at home/with family

One of the most recurring themes was staff reporting more time to spend at home and/or with their families. For some this meant being better able to carry out their caring duties and for others it meant more quality time with their children, such as having dinner together as a family. Exercising, doing jobs around the house and gardening also got frequent mentions with some saying they were getting more

fresh air and were eating healthier in lockdown.

2. IT and digital platforms

Another significant theme was colleagues' positive experiences with IT systems, the support received from IT, and embracing, quickly and effectively new digital platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Teams and WhatsApp to communicate with colleagues and customers.

3. Lack of commute

Colleagues who are homeworking repeatedly highlighted the lack of a commute as a major positive. The further they normally commute, the more they find this a benefit with some reporting a big difference to the quality of their life and their productivity levels.

4. Flexibility

Although a number of people report heavy workloads and long days in other questions, for many working from home also brings a flexibility which they like. The sense of having more control over when they work, particularly for those with young families, comes through strongly in response to what has gone well.

5. PPE and safety measures

In responses from frontline staff working in our communities and in our care services, the PPE provision and other safety measures are highlighted as having worked well for them.

6. Supporting customers and people we work for

The time, the level of support and the opportunity to deliver great services to customers and people we work for is a recurring theme among frontline staff who call this out as something that, in very challenging circumstances, has worked well.

7. Support from managers, colleagues and organisation

Staff from all areas mention the support from managers, colleagues and from the organisation as something that has worked well during lockdown. Their comments covered informal support from within their teams as well as from their line manager and the wider support provided by the organisation.

8. Being on furlough

While in Question 1 we saw evidence of a very mixed reaction to being on furlough, in this question many respondents spoke positively about their experience

on furlough, again highlighting having more time with their families or to spend on things they enjoy.

Q3. What has not worked as well for you or your team during lockdown?

This question invited people to talk about what had not worked well. Understandably respondents talked about the most difficult issues and challenges they faced over the period. Interestingly, a significant proportion of staff – around 20% - reported no issues at all, saying they, their team and the organisation responded very well to such an unprecedented situation.

Here are the most common themes.

1. Working from home

Working from home posed significant challenges for a lot of staff, particularly over childcare.

Looking after children and home schooling was difficult, while some staff also had to care for elderly family members.

Not having a proper workstation at home, sometimes causing back and neck problems, as well as lack of space and privacy was an issue. Some staff had to use – or buy – their own equipment, such as a chair, while others faced increased broadband costs, particularly if another family member is using their Wifi, as well as increased fuel bills at home.

Working from home left many staff feeling isolated, and missing the support of their colleagues.

2. Work-life balance

Closely connected to issues around working from home were issues around work/life balance. A significant proportion of staff reported being unable to switch off, facing increasing workload and feeling constantly at work.

One staff member summed it up: “It’s all work and hardly any balance.”

This, along with child care issues, led to feelings of anxiety, stress and guilt.

3. Increased workload

Also closely related to issues around work/life balance, many staff reported an increased workload, and a lack of recognition of the extra pressures they are under.

They reported feeling constantly at work, always asked to do more, with colleagues on furlough meaning extra duties for those still working.

4. Lack of communication / support from managers

While staff acknowledged the difficult circumstances everyone was facing, there was concern expressed by some over the level of communication, contact and direction from managers.

Some staff reported a lack of contact or regular meetings, which left them feeling isolated, disconnected and undervalued.

It should be noted that in other questions, eg question 4, many staff report being very pleased with the support they received from their managers.

5. Isolation / missing colleagues

One of the biggest issues staff faced was missing the office environment and the support from colleagues.

While meetings and conversations via Zoom or Skype helped, it wasn’t the same as being able to bounce ideas off each other and resolve difficult issues together.

This led to a sense of disconnect and not feeling part of a team.

6. IT issues

A significant proportion of staff were very happy with the IT systems they had, as well as support from the IT team.

However, some reported IT issues, with systems crashing, iPads not ideal to carry out their roles, a lack of a proper phone, not having two screens at their workstation, as well as too many platforms and systems which are not compatible.

7. Lack of face to face contact with customers

Some staff working from home reported missing the lack of face to face contact with customers, both on a personal and an operational level.

Staff are dedicated to their customers and miss being able to support them and provide the service they normally would. Some said that difficult conversations about rent, for example, were more easily resolved face-to-face.

Relevant staff felt the approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour, contacting the complainer but not the perpetrator, didn't work well.

Q4. What has surprised/pleased/disappointed you the most?

There were a lot of very positive comments to this question, in particular around how well most people felt they had adapted to working from home.

Generally speaking, the most common theme overall was around the fact that staff were surprised, and pleased, at how well they had coped and adapted to working from home during lockdown and how much they enjoyed the new work/life balance.

A significant number also reported being pleased with the support from colleagues and managers and how well everyone was 'pulling together' during difficult times.

There were a lot of comments about how team morale was high and many staff actually felt closer and more connected to their teams and colleagues, even though they were at home. Main disappointments highlighted by respondents were around different work patterns and time off and some expressed disappointment around the furlough scheme.

Here is a summary of the key themes.

1. Surprised - how well people have coped with lockdown and enjoyed the new work/life balance

The most common theme was staff reporting how surprised (and pleased) they were at how well they had coped with working from home. A significant number said they were also surprised at how they, and their colleagues, had adapted to it – and how quickly.

For many working from home has given them a much better work/life balance and, in turn, they feel less stressed.

A high number said they have enjoyed the flexibility it gives them (particularly around the hours, and working outwith a strict 9-5 regime) and stated how much happier they've felt as a result.

There were a handful of comments around how stressful the situation had been, especially those with young children and other family working at home, however this had perhaps not come as a

surprise so was not reflected strongly.

2. Surprised at how much can be achieved and delivered from home

Another strong theme coming through was how surprised staff were at how much they were achieving (and delivering) from home and how productive they were without office distractions.

A high number reported feeling more comfortable in their own surroundings and being able to be more flexible. Many staff said they were proud of what they'd achieved and delivered.

3. Surprised at the digital technology, transition to home working and pleased with IT Support

Another significant theme was surprise at the positive experience of using new technology such as Zoom, Skype and Teams calls to keep in touch and carry out the job.

There were a significant amount of comments praising the support of the IT teams and how fast everyone had received help, especially at the start of lockdown. Everyone seems to have really enjoyed using the new methods of communication, even those that were hesitant at the start.

4. Pleased at the support of colleagues and managers and how everyone has 'pulled together'

There were a significant number of staff who commented that the support they had received from their managers, and colleagues had been brilliant. A large majority of staff also said they felt relationships with work colleagues had been strengthened through the new methods of communication and they were having more regular, meaningful conversations.

There were many staff who said they'd received a lot of support and understanding from managers and commented that morale was high.

5. Pleased (and surprised) at how much we've been able to do to help customers during this time and their positive response

A large number of staff reported that they were pleased about services they were able to deliver to customers, and how positive the response had been to this.

There was a real sense of pride coming through from these comments about how pleased staff were

that they could still help people, from home, during such difficult times. Staff said they felt it was very rewarding being able to help people like this.

6. Pleased about how Wheatley have looked out for staff (mental wellbeing etc)

A large number of staff commented about the way in which Wheatley was supporting them, looking out for them and the particular focus on mental health. Many liked the introduction of the Wheatley Family Hub, however, there were also comments from some that they just didn't have the time to take part, but the idea was great.

7. Pleased about less time spent in traffic/commute

Colleagues who have been working from home repeatedly highlight the lack of a commute as a major positive. There were a lot of comments around the difference to the work/life balance as a result and indeed their productivity levels.

Many also said they felt their working days felt shorter without that long commute at either end of the day, making them feel much happier.

8. Pleased with communication generally, but disappointment around lack of communication from line managers

A significant number of staff commented that they are pleased with the communication updates, the level of information they are receiving generally through the intranet and also from MDs and Martin.

However, there were also a number of comments on the lack of communication, and in some cases contact, from line managers.

9. Disappointed around varying working patterns/time off

A number of staff expressed disappointment around what they say is different working patterns and time off being given to some teams and not others. Also some comments around how working conditions for different people varied because of their different conditions at home.

10. Disappointed – furlough and annual leave – mixed reactions

A significant number of staff who are working/home-working commented on the issue of furlough, with a lot of mixed feelings. Some felt there was a lack of recognition for those who have continued to work,

for example.

A large number of comments also focus on the issue of annual leave – for those on furlough they are accruing leave and are keeping public holidays while those working are having to use their leave for a day off here and there.

There were some comments, from those on furlough, around the lack of communication while they've been off.

Q5 - What has been your biggest personal challenge or issue?

Answers to this question were fairly evenly split between work and personal issues, and on many occasions responses included both.

Work issues tended to be around the amount of work and the pressures to deliver, amount of information to process and the stress that can cause.

Personal issues tended to be around coping with lockdown, concerns for their family, family commitments and even dealing with the death of family and friends.

Here is a summary of the key themes.

1. Balancing your time and work/home life

Far and away the most common challenge is the balancing of a work/ home life especially for those with children. A number of answers expressed guilt at not being there for family members.

Working and living in the same space and managing time to achieve work/life balance was also a challenge. Many of those who work from home said they had taken fewer breaks and were also tempted to go back online later in the evening.

On the whole, management have been praised for their flexibility and support, especially for those who are working and having to home school children.

2. Working from home

Working from home was a common theme, mainly about adapting to this different way of working and the challenges of finding a suitable space in the home and getting used to a new routine.

3. Loneliness and Isolation

A fairly common theme is not being able to physically interact with others with the feelings of

loneliness and isolation becoming a challenge. This theme was expressed by colleagues across the business.

4. Mental Health and wellbeing

A significant theme was feelings of stress, low mood and anxiety during lockdown. Comments mention stress and pressure of extra workload and the effects of the whole coronavirus situation. Staff who are furloughed also say that this is a challenge.

5. Communicating with colleagues and customers

A significant number of respondents found their biggest challenge was not having face to face interaction with colleagues and customers. Not being in the office and missing the 'buzz and chatter' of being with colleagues was also a challenge.

On a personal basis a large majority have found it challenging not being able to see family too.

6. Safety of self, family and others

For those who needed to be at work and out and about, their safety and fears of passing the virus on to others was a concern among the respondents.

7. Furlough

There are a number of comments which mention furlough and the concern and worry over the future. There was a smattering of comments that some had enjoyed the time off. Others have faced challenges with colleagues not being around due to furlough.

8. Travelling to work on public transport

For those who were travelling into work this theme was common. Their answers described the anxiety of being on public transport and a fear of catching the virus.

9. Technology

The use of technology and having the right equipment in the early days was a challenge for many, as was the ability to use the equipment and the new digital platforms.

System issues were a common frustration early on but seem to have settled, according to many of the respondents.

Throughout IT colleagues are praised as being extremely helpful.

Q6 – What would have improved your ability to cope better, personally and professionally?

This question asked people to reflect on what, in hindsight, might have helped them cope better.

A significant number of respondents, almost 25%, said there was nothing they could think of, and many of those commented that they didn't think Wheatley could have done any more than it has done under the circumstances.

By far the most popular answers were around their work set up – including IT and equipment, work space at home, or the workplace, as well as the support and communication with their manager and the rest of the team.

Here is a summary of the keys themes.

1. Working from home set up, equipment and workspace

One of the most recurring themes was staff reporting issues with the space they have to work in at home, or the equipment (or lack of), that they have.

Comments centred around working from whatever space was available at home, often kitchen or dining tables, sometimes bedrooms. It also highlighted that when working from home for an extended period of time, a suitable chair and desk space are desirable.

2. Contact with team and manager

This was also a common theme. This seems to vary widely between teams, with some respondents reporting excellent support from their manager and colleagues, while others felt they needed more. Some teams have embraced the technology with regular Zoom or Skype meetings and WhatsApp groups and where this has been the case, this seems to have had a positive effect.

3. Mental health and wellbeing

A number of staff highlighted the impact on mental health and wellbeing. This includes a feeling of isolation generally, and especially when dealing with a difficult issue, when you would normally share that with a colleague.

It's clear that staff are missing regular contact with colleagues, particularly face to face.

4. Working hours, workload and flexibility

A significant number of staff reported finding the lines blurred between home life and working. They

have found it difficult to switch off and separate the two. Flexibility during the working day/week (or lack of) and working hours was also highlighted a lot.

Those with school age children reported finding it difficult to balance work with home schooling.

A number of staff also raised the issue of workload and the pressure and volume of work.

There were also some specific issues raised around shifts and shift patterns.

5. Being on furlough

There were some responses from furloughed staff who felt they would have liked more information about furlough, more regular contact and plans for returning to work.

Q7 – How would you describe the support made available to you?

The responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive. More than 85% of the responses were positive about the support that was available.

The majority of those who said the support available was good mentioned things like their line managers being there for them when they needed them. They praised the content on W.E. Connect, including the Daily Uplift and Family Hub. IT and HR had been extremely helpful.

A large section of respondents said they knew what support was out there, but they did not need it. Some respondents mentioned they would have liked to benefit from the activities on the Family Hub or the mindfulness course but did not have time. There was praise for the stories and blogs on W.E. Connect.

Here is a summary of the key themes in this question.

1. Support from line managers

One of the biggest recurring themes was the brilliant support staff felt from their managers. A large number of answers mentioned managers being there to listen and that they were understanding of the situation and flexible in their approach. A majority of respondents, said the support from their line manager was the most important support they received. There were a small number of comments which said their line manager could have offered more one-to-one support.

2. Personal Protective Equipment

Lots of answers mentioned the support received through the procurement of personal protective equipment. Respondents said it was readily available, and any requests for missing items had been fulfilled very early on. Many colleagues said that the availability of PPE made them feel their safety was a priority and they, therefore, felt valued by Wheatley Group.

3. Support from colleagues

A significant number of respondents said the support they received from their fellow colleagues was the most important form of support available. Respondents said they could lean on one another, and that the situation had caused them to become stronger as a team.

4. W.E. Connect and internal communications

Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about internal communications, noting that W.E. Connect had helped them feel connected and up-to-date, and the blogs and stories were praised. Many commented that the support available to them was easy to find. A large number of responses specifically praised Martin's weekly email messages.

Some said they would have liked more time to be able to do the activities or read the blogs on W.E. Connect. Frontline staff also pointed out that for them, it was almost impossible to take part in activities during normal working hours. There were some respondents who mentioned the content on the Family Hub was too focused on children. For a few people the constant positive stories on W.E. Connect was a struggle when they themselves were facing a tough time.

5. Not enough time to access support

Many of those who praised the support they were offered commented they did not have the time to use it. Many cited the need to meet their deadlines, pressure from managers and a lack of headspace outwith work as barriers.

6. IT – software and hardware

There was wide praise for the support colleagues received from IT and the support they received with general desk equipment. A large proportion of answers mentioned the IT's quick responses and efficiency in dealing with problems, and many praised them for setting up the home working system so quickly. There were a small number of

respondents who faced difficulty getting their IT issues sorted out, but these were in the minority.

7. Furloughed staff

Most of those who identified themselves as being furloughed did say they felt supported by Wheatley with regular calls and emails and reassurance. There were a minority who felt they could have received more support while furloughed.

8. Workload/Caring responsibilities

A number of respondents commented their caring responsibilities were not taken into account enough when assessing deadlines and workloads. However, there were respondents who said they had been able to strike a balance. Quite a few respondents struggled with the workload, given the difficult personal circumstances colleagues were in during lockdown.

9. Use of new technology

Many respondents, both those working from home and on the frontline, positively mentioned the use of technology to support them. This could be through a WhatsApp group where teams discuss specific cases and share advice, a weekly Zoom catch-up or even a social event like a quiz. The responses were overwhelmingly positive; technology has improved their ability to cope and offered support where needed.

10. Senior management

The majority of responses mentioning senior management complimented the visibility of senior management (especially through Martin's messages) and also the fact they felt they could go to senior management with issues. There were also some responses mentioning a lack of support for their teams from senior management.

11. HR support

A number of responses mentioned the support they had received from the HR team. Quite a few people had also taken the mindfulness course or accessed Confidential Care and found these both to be really helpful support tools.

Q8 What do you think customers have felt about our services and support during lockdown?

According to respondents, EatWell and the Emergency Response Fund were particularly well received among customers. Words that recurred include 'overwhelmed', 'grateful', 'positive', 'lifeline',

'amazed' and 'blown away'.

Customers have been especially touched by welfare calls, simply having someone to talk to and knowing they were there, made an enormous difference to their wellbeing – and to how they view the organisation.

Within the overwhelmingly positive responses, a minority of respondents mentioned other customer perceptions and concerns. These included:

- frustration at reduced services, especially repairs and NETs;
- unhappiness at paying for services they aren't receiving;
- anti-social behaviour;
- lack of clarity on criteria for accessing services in some communications; and
- mental health of people in care services.

Here is a summary of these key themes.

1. Overwhelmingly positive about our response

Overwhelmingly, staff said they felt customers and people we work for were happy with the service they received and that we had made a real difference through emergency food, welfare checks, care and support services and the response fund.

2. Improved relationships, better engagement

A very positive outcome is that several staff report improved relationships with customers, on a personal and professional basis.

Customers are very appreciative of welfare calls and that personal connection has built trust with staff. Customers are also more aware of services available to them, and are seeing their landlord in a much more positive way. Staff anticipate this will lead to better engagement in the future.

3. Customer concerns and issues

While staff report the vast majority of customers have been very understanding about the necessary reduction in services, some are unhappy. At the time of the survey there was an impatience emerging for services to resume, particularly the repairs, grass-cutting and close-cleaning.

A minority of staff reported some unhappiness from customers at having to pay for services they were not receiving.

Care staff reported feeling concerned about the

impact of lockdown on the mental health and wellbeing of the people they work for. Some customers were finding restrictions difficult, were missing the regular face-to-face support, and were feeling the effects of increased isolation.

Q9. As lockdown restrictions ease, what more can Wheatley do to assist you?

Overall, the most significant themes coming through focused around staff saying they were very happy with the support they had received to-date.

A large majority said they wanted the support and good communication to continue with clear, concise and regular updates. A large number said they couldn't think of anymore that Wheatley could do as they had done so much.

A significant number of people talked about how they wanted to be supported to continue to work from home where possible, with a flexible approach to this. Some talked about working from home full-time and some a blended mix of both. There were comments from several around wanting to get back to normality.

Another theme was around PPE and it being available, alongside information on how the new offices would work in terms of safety measures.

The topic of furlough also featured including bringing staff back as things got busier and support to help people integrate back in.

Here is a summary of the key themes.

1. Communication and support

One of the most common themes was the fact that staff felt very supported and they wanted this to continue. A high number said there had been excellent communication throughout and they hoped that would also continue, with clear and concise information on things like PPE, working practices as well as the future plans for the Group and the business plan.

2. Working from home where possible, with a flexible approach

Another strong theme coming through was that staff wanted to be supported to work from home more, even on a blended approach. Many reported they'd like flexibility around this, especially where they had children, or the job didn't require them to be in the office all of the time.

3. PPE and safety measures

A high number of staff reported they wanted to make sure that PPE was available for returning to more normal work patterns, especially for those going into homes.

Many people talked about the office layouts, and how this would work, and some were against hot desking and sharing equipment.

Some people highlighted not rushing back to offices. They felt guidelines and rules should be clear around distancing and other measures.

4. Review of IT, equipment and desk space

There were a large number of comments around equipment and how if home-working was going to continue a full review of IT, hardware and desk equipment should be considered.

5. Furlough – supporting people to come back

A high number of staff commented about the issue of furlough and how they hoped consideration would be given to bringing some back to help ease pressures of annual leave or when services get busier again.

Also a lot of staff felt that people who had been off for a long time would need support to integrate them back into working.

6. Concerns around use of public transport

The final theme coming through this question was around the issue of public transport. Many people expressed concerns about this and how it would affect their work patterns, for example, with reduced bus and train timetables.

Staff said they hoped this would be taken into consideration when they had to return and also asked that plans for re-starting in the offices could be shared so people could plan.

Q10 – What have you and your team learned – and what might be taken forward into the new normal?

A very large number of respondents in this question highlighted working from home as their biggest learning experience with many suggesting this could be something we take forward in future in some way.

Others pointed to our ability to adapt quickly to our new circumstances as the central learning and how we had been able to use technology effectively,

while many frontline staff called out the new ways we had found to support customers and people we work for.

Other responses on what we should take forward included a focus on safety, team work and recognition and support for our staff.

Here are the key themes for this question.

1. Working from home

Working from home was a key theme in response to what had been learned and what should be taken forward. Most people who highlighted working from home said we had learned it could be done, and done effectively and that it brought benefits such as better work/life balance, time saved on commute and increased productivity. However many called for consideration to be given to a more blended or flexible approach as we move forward. Reasons given for this include isolation, missing the interaction of office working and the difficulties of always working around the rest of the household.

2. Our ability to adapt and respond quickly

A very common theme among all groups of staff was how we had discovered the extent to which we could, in our teams and as an organisation, adapt well to changing circumstances and respond quickly and flexibly. This sense of adapting and responding quickly was something many respondents felt we should hold on to as we move forward.

3. Staying safe with standards and procedures in place

Those who continued to work on the frontline of our care, housing support and environmental services highlighted how they learned about the vital importance of safety including measures such as hand hygiene, social distancing and PPE. Many outlined the need to continue with this as a focus.

4. Team work, collaboration, communication and sharing

Many respondents talked about how they had learned they were part of a great team. Sometimes they were referring to their own local team and sometimes to the wider organisation as a team. They talked about pulling or rallying together and highlighted factors such as good communication, sharing best practice and helping each other through. There was a clear sense in these answers that staff wanted to see the strong team work developed through the pandemic continue.

5. Our role in supporting customers and people we work for

Some staff chose to describe their work with customers as the thing they've learned about most. This includes being able to deliver services in different ways, offering new services or reaching out to customers we wouldn't normally have much contact with. In some cases it also involves learning from the impact on people of our reduced services. Many of these answers include calls to retain what they've learned in our new work practices.

6. Embracing digital and continuing the journey

Our ability to use IT to our advantage and to work with new digital platforms features in many answers, both in response to what we learned and what we should take forward.

7. Recognition and support for staff

Supporting, protecting and recognising staff is important for a number of respondents. Some answers ask for support and recognition to continue post-pandemic while others are asking for more recognition for the efforts and hard work of staff.

8. Issues staff feel dissatisfied with

A minority of respondents answer the question by highlighting individual issues they are not happy with and asking for these to be addressed going forward. These answers cover issues including uniforms, the furlough scheme, understaffing, leadership visibility and a sense of teams working in silos.

Q11 – What should be our priorities?

There were some clear themes emerging in the responses to this question on what our priorities should be.

The clearest priority, with a large number of staff mentioning it in their response in some way, was the safety, welfare and wellbeing, both physical and mental, of staff and customers.

Other priorities supported by significant numbers of respondents were:

- › valuing and recognising staff;
- › supporting customers and people we work for;
- › getting core services back up and running;
- › offering flexible working options;
- › continuing our digital journey;
- › re-introducing face-to-face contact; and
- › listening, engaging and learning.

Here is a summary of each theme.

1. Health, safety and wellbeing of staff and customers

This was by far and away the most common answer among staff from across Wheatley. The answers alluded to both the physical safety of people as we return to a new normal and their mental well-being. In many cases the response was short and to the point with staff saying simply 'The safety/welfare of staff and customers/people we work for' or 'staff well-being'. In other answers people elaborated on the kinds of safety measures they thought should be a priority. Many staff who cited other priorities in their answer mentioned health and safety or employees' mental health as also being a top priority.

2. Value, recognise and support staff

A call to recognise and reward staff comes through as a priority. In these answers some respondents acknowledge there is appreciation for staff but ask for consideration to be given to further rewarding groups of staff who have worked through the pandemic. Most answers call for general recognition, reward or appreciation but some also suggest reward and recognition through additional annual leave or a pay rise.

3. Support for customers and people we work for

An equally high number of respondents said the priority should be customers and people we work for, and providing them with the services and support they need. Again many people expressed this with a single word: 'Customers', 'Tenants', 'PWWF'. Many made the point that our customers deserved and needed our support.

4. Re-introduction of core services

Many respondents, keen to see things return to normal, chose here to talk about the reintroduction of our core frontline services as being the top priority. Answers mentioned repairs, letting, anti-social behaviour services and environmental services.

5. Offering flexible working options

As we've seen in other questions home working has been a big talking point for respondents who have outlined a range of benefits and challenges. In this question about what our priority should be, a number of staff highlight the need to retain options to work flexibly, particularly from home. Reasons given for this include supporting people with their work/life balance, helping parents with childcare and other family commitments, and facilitating more

efficient and productive work practices.

6. Continue our focus on digital

For many, one of the priorities was maintaining and growing our digital focus, both for staff and for customers. In part this was linked to facilitating home, remote and flexible working but some of the comments were also focused on customer experience and engagement. Here are some of the views around making our digital journey a priority.

7. Bring back more face-to face contact

A smaller number of staff from different parts of the business call out bringing back face-to-face contact, as a priority. This in part reflects the sense, seen in other questions, that people are finding the isolation and lack of human interaction difficult. For some respondents, however, this is a priority because they believe it is only through face-to-face contact that they'll be able to deliver the right, tailored service and support to tenants and people we work for.

8. Listen, learn and respond

A smaller but nonetheless significant number of respondents answered by asking that Wheatley listens, learns and responds by putting new approaches and practices in place.

Team Wheatley
caring, connected, creative

Staff Survey
Working through a pandemic

Summer 2020
Making homes and lives better

Staff Focus Groups

August 2020

Introduction

Six focus groups took place throughout July following the online staff survey and interviews which gathered staff views on people's experiences in lockdown and Wheatley's response to the crisis.

The focus groups were aimed at exploring further some of the key themes which emerged during the survey and at capturing views from staff on what learning should be incorporated into how we work in future.

The focus group discussions were carried out on Zoom and were hosted by Director of Communications and Marketing Yvonne Flynn and supported by colleagues from HR and the Communications Team.

A total of 46 participants representing all sectors, subsidiaries and geographic areas in the Group took part.

The themes explored were:

- homeworking and a future blended model;
- supporting customers – what we've learned;
- rewarding and recognising staff; and
- leading and managing in a flexible working model.

People who took part including the supporting staff, contributed enthusiastically and seemed to enjoy the experience of getting together with different colleagues to share experiences and views.

Summary of feedback

- Participants were overwhelmingly positive around Wheatley's response to the coronavirus crisis across all the themes explored.
- Echoing the findings of the survey, participants were enthusiastic about the idea of retaining some flexible and remote working and supported a future blended working model.
- The key challenges to resolve for the future included supporting staff with their physical work space and equipment, retaining the right level of flexibility and structure for those with caring responsibilities and helping people to minimise isolation and protect their wellbeing.

- There was acceptance that the office of the future would be very different and serve different purposes including a place to go to meet and collaborate, and a functional space for printing, storing and accessing files and other tasks.
- Customers were very positive about our services and saw us as more human
- The biggest shift was from face-to-face interaction to engaging with customers by phone and digital channels
- Staff wanted to retain, or explore further, the use of phone and digital channel support as they saw it brought benefits but also stressed the importance of keeping some face-to-face interaction for some situations.
- Teams believed they had worked together well, for example housing and NETs, built stronger relationships and wanted to retain the benefits of improved teamwork.
- While some staff called for greater reward and recognition in the staff survey, when explored in the focus group, participants were hugely appreciative of the existing reward and recognition at Wheatley and described the benefits as 'brilliant' and 'second to none'.
- The importance of a thank you from senior leaders was emphasised with one NETs colleague recounting how he was buzzing for a week after receiving a 'well done' call from Wheatley's Neighbourhood Services Manager.
- Ideas for recognising teams' efforts during lockdown included: a big party, an awards ceremony or events where people could get together to share experiences.
- For leaders one of the big challenges had been balancing spending more time supporting staff while delivering on demanding and heavy workloads and working remotely.
- There was a need to redefine the principals of leadership at Wheatley with opportunities to learn and develop skills for leading in the new normal and to share experiences with other leaders.
- Leaders were apprehensive around managing people returning from furlough and supporting them to integrate back into work and the team.

A summary for each theme is attached below.

1. Homeworking and a future blended model

Two focus groups took place around this theme, with a total of 15 participants from across Group. The aim was to gather experiences and feedback for how elements of homeworking could be carried forward into our new working model and what the key considerations should be.

The following summarises the discussion on this theme.

General response to homeworking and challenges

Most people found working from home a positive experience and said that it had worked well on the whole. This echoed the general sentiment expressed through the survey and the interviews. People said virtual working through tools like Microsoft teams, zoom and digital working in general meant they could work as normal and maintain contact with colleagues.

Some staff like the fact that there are fewer distractions when working from home, and reported being able to concentrate better on pieces of work. Those with children found they had constant interruptions from their dependants. However, there was also an acknowledgement that this is likely to improve once the schools go back.

Lack of daily commute was highlighted as a positive as it allowed staff to use this time to deal with work priorities instead.

Housing officers spoke about the iPad rollout and how this had helped them be less paper-based and allowed some element of remote working before lockdown. They also mentioned arrears performance had improved as those with a wider patch area spent less time travelling and had more time to dedicate to customer calls. They said communication by phone is fine, but that you can't beat face-to-face interaction with customers.

Some people, again confirming the feedback from the survey, faced particular challenges in their home working circumstances. Those highlighted were:

- having a quiet, appropriate place to work within the family home;
- balancing childcare while there is no one else to look after children; and
- feeling cut off from their team and colleagues.

Future working model

A blended 'best of both worlds' model was popular, with a balance to be struck between the flexibility of working from home and retaining the benefits of office working.

There was some discussion that staff should be given the choice to decide whether they want to work from their home or an office, but also an acknowledgement that availability of office space will be determined by government guidance.

A blended model would need to be built around the needs of the organisation and will also depend on the job role and the individual.

People felt a 50/50 split between time at home and the office would be a good balance.

Support for those with caring responsibilities

The group discussed what the organisation needed to consider when it came to supporting staff with caring responsibilities.

People shared some of the difficulties they faced, but also acknowledged many of these problems were caused by lockdown and lack of childcare, rather than homeworking. When schools and nurseries reopen working from home would become easier.

One participant was concerned about working at home with very young children, and the practicalities of being able to focus on work and customers and meet his family's needs.

Other people talked about difficulties of working from home with the family there – for example, having to ask children to be quiet or go away when they are working in a family space like a kitchen.

Flexibility around location and hours

Flexibility was seen as a key consideration in the two groups, both around location and hours worked.

People were appreciative of the support and flexibility Wheatley had already shown, which had allowed them to manage things better. Some members of the focus group had younger children and expressed enthusiasm for homeworking to allow them to manage school and nursery pick-ups and drop-offs better.

There was also some interest in a flexible approach to working hours for staff with caring responsibilities. During lockdown, some participants had agreed non-standard hours with their team, such as working in the morning, taking a break in the afternoon to look after children, and logging in again in the evening. They found this flexibility very helpful.

There was also a suggestion customers might prefer to be able to speak to someone at the end of the working day.

Need for structure and boundaries

People also said they needed structure along with flexibility, and needed to know what hours and where they will be working so they can manage responsibilities such as caring for children or older family members. An ad-hoc, last-minute approach would not suit them.

Others felt flexible working was difficult for the business. People need to be contacted by colleagues and customers during the day, and the organisation needs to be able to respond to emergency situations. Even day-to-day projects could get held up if people are working at different times.

Some concerns were expressed about the divisiveness of flexible working. Prioritising the needs of working parents over those without children could be seen as unfair and generate resentment because all staff need a work/life balance.

In summary, the organisation would need to consider:

- the needs of people with pre-school children;
- balancing the needs of the business with a more flexible working pattern while ensuring other members of the team are not plugging gaps;
- the requirement of some people to have the same working pattern every week because out of school care and nursery hours are usually fixed; and
- The impact on family life – such as the loss of a family space – of more home working

Physical work environment

Concerns were expressed about the lack of suitable workspace at home. Some younger staff still living with their parents had to work on their bed, some were working in family spaces like kitchens, while others were without a suitable space for a desk, computer or office chair.

While many staff 'made it work' during lockdown, it would not be ideal if working from home is to be a long term/permanent arrangement.

Issues highlighted included:

- a lack of devices to work on – some have only an iPad – and patchy wifi
- the financial implications, especially for lower-paid colleagues, of buying a desk and chair, and the cost of heating, lighting, wifi and electricity, especially in winter
- the need for training in Microsoft Teams and similar platforms

Mental well-being and isolation

Mental wellbeing, isolation and the loss of separation between work and home life were also seen as important considerations for the future. Some participants felt pressure to be 'always available' and were tempted to keep working late, checking and responding to emails when they weren't working.

Concerns were also expressed about people who live alone and derive much social wellbeing from coming to work, being in town and being able to see friends at lunchtime.

The point was made that working from home doesn't suit everyone and 'is not what people signed up for'.

The importance of retaining face-to-face contact with colleagues, and one-to-one time with managers, was seen as important in supporting mental wellbeing.

Staying connected and supported

The use of technology was seen as key in staying connected during lockdown.

Some people felt they got enough interaction through Whatsapp, zoom and phone calls. The need to share best practice on using these platforms was highlighted.

Others regarded these platforms as useful but no substitute for the social side, along with support and advice from colleagues, of being in the office.

There was also a suggestion that people working remotely could lose that sense of feeling 'part of Wheatley'.

Networking events would become more important to keep that sense of being connected and of sharing the organisation's culture.

Positives to come out of this have been an increase in joint working by some subsidiaries where their geographical patches sometimes cross, for example Loretto Housing and Cube.

Learning and development, and culture

The group felt working in an office was important for learning and development, particularly for younger staff. Watching and learning from colleagues, as well as support and advice over difficult issues, could be lost without an office environment.

Working from home reduces the opportunities for collaboration and sharing ideas and it was seen as important that our new working model addresses this.

People felt Wheatley had a strong culture, a set of shared values and vision, which has been strengthened by the way people pulled together during lockdown. There was discussion around how new staff would integrate into this culture if they were in the office less.

The future of the office

People discussed what the purpose of an office would be, if a more blended approach was adopted.

Human interaction was seen as a very important part of it, and space for collaboration and networking would need to be incorporated.

Housing officers said they still need to go to an office for paper files, printing letters and so on.

Practical considerations highlighted included the need for social distancing, meaning a reduced capacity in the short term.

Consideration is also needed for those who need specific work equipment identified through a DSE assessment, as they would have less flexibility around where they could work and which desk they could use.

People were enthusiastic about the idea of an office space being more than a place to log on to a computer and work, but as somewhere where people could go to do specific things, meet people, share ideas and work collaboratively.

Participants didn't want to lose the option of coming to the office because it was important to be with people, meet colleagues and build relationships – as well as being a place where necessary equipment is.

One person visualised an office as more of a hub, where people can get together and share ideas, a really good meeting space for customers and staff, and not just a bank of desks.

2. Supporting customers, learning and the future

Two focus groups took place around the theme of Supporting Customers. There were 16 participants from across the Group including representatives from care, NETs, CSC, repairs and GHA, Dunedin Canmore and DGHP.

The aim of the discussion was to gather views on what staff had learned about delivering services in different ways during lockdown and what aspects of the learning could be carried forward.

What did customers think about our services?

Staff reported that the overwhelming majority of customers were blown away by the support we were giving them.

There was also a strong feeling that the support being given to customers by staff has really 'humanised housing'.

Staff reflected on being stopped in the street when they started getting out and about again – people no longer seeing staff as debt collectors, and only at the door because of ASB.

The environmental teams commented that customers were more appreciative of them, coming out to talk to them recently when they're cutting grass and engaging with them more when they've been delivering food parcels and ERF requests.

What was different about interactions?

Representatives from Care and Housing both agreed their interaction with customers changed drastically because of lockdown, going from face-to-face contact to telephone support.

The Housing Officers mentioned the use of new technology with customers such as FaceTime and Whatsapp. This was seen as a big positive and a good way to reach customers during lockdown.

Generally, the group felt there was a lot more positive engagement from customers over the phone – and also through digital methods of contact. Some staff felt they engaged with tenants they usually wouldn't have through welfare calls carried out during lockdown and this allowed them to speak to more customers than average.

There was a general feeling that this increased engagement was perhaps because there was less pressure and less anxiety for some customers (particularly those who are more vulnerable/challenging) than when they're sitting face-to-face having difficult conversations

However staff said there was still a real need to retain flexibility to have face-to-face contact where required. People agreed there were times where you need to see someone to understand and read their body language and gauge their emotional reactions.

Although telephone support has been a good alternative to face-to-face support, a care member of staff mentioned that some of the conversations with those they were supporting had been particularly challenging as lockdown progressed. It was also noted that it was hard to separate work and life because staff were having serious and emotional conversations in their own homes.

NETs staff said one of the things that was different for them was there was an increase in going to the shops for customers, and picking up prescriptions due to the numbers of people self-isolating or shielding. They also delivered food parcels to them and called on vulnerable tenants to check they were OK.

It was also recognised that the housing team relied heavily on the NETs to make face-to-face visits, maintaining contact with customers who weren't engaging. The good working relationships between NETs and housing officers was highlighted as a major success of lockdown.

What have you learned that you would keep going forward?

Regular welfare checks would be something care staff would like to see continue. They would also like new mediums such as Zoom explored. Many of the vulnerable people we work for are feeling anxious about coming back to 'normal' life. Some will continue to shield. It was stressed that these people could end up feeling more marginalised if they aren't reached by new methods of communication going forward.

As housing staff start home visits again, the fact that some customers rely on lip-reading to communicate was highlighted. Mitigations would need to be in place for these customers (visors instead of masks, for example).

For the NETs, they felt their systems and processes were strong before lockdown, and that's why they were able to scale these up successfully. They'd like to continue to keep up the contact with customers as these interactions and ad hoc tasks are important to the people we support. Helping customers had felt really good and staff would love to hang on to that in some way.

For housing staff in DGHP, they have struggled with large patch sizes throughout lockdown. They would like to move to having 200 homes per housing officer so they can continue to give a more personal and dedicated service.

For repairs, there is nothing they would take forward. They have struggled during lockdown and are looking forward to services re-starting again.

It was felt that working from home was both good and bad. If you had small children, it was very stressful, but it also offered many the chance to focus on a task and be more productive. Staff would like to see home working continue, and allowances made for those with children if schools do not go back full time.

Staff said better work/life balance meant they felt more in control which in turn brought a real benefit and value to the customers due to having more time to spend with them.

Many on the group said they felt less stressed, more relaxed, more in control, able to make more decisions – all through working from home. An example - some said at times they might be logging in early and doing emails, and then again later at night, however they didn't mind that as in between through the day, if they had to hang their washing out they could take the time to do that – the work/life balance was much better

DGHP staff said it had been a challenge but the 'think yes' approach had been embraced and everyone is feeling much more empowered in their jobs and can make their own decisions, creating less stress. They wanted to keep that sense of empowerment while also getting the restructure completed.

As internal customers, how did you feel you were supported by IT, Comms, HR, CSC during lockdown?

Generally staff felt completely supported, even lone workers who knew someone was on the end of the phone at all times

The consensus was that there has always been a sense of togetherness; everyone pulled together as one during lockdown. The NETs perhaps felt this the most.

IT staff said it was a learning curve to support internal customers working from home to start with – particularly getting everyone up and running all at once and on different devices (Macs, ipads etc). But there was all-round praise for IT's support during lockdown. They were quick to sort everything at the beginning and have offered great support throughout. The fact we can all access our desktops like we're in the office was highlighted.

There was also positive feedback on HR. With comments about them, 'being just a phone call away,' and 'fantastic as usual'. The group commented that communications has been really good and the 'daily uplift' has been great – it's good to share the experience of the teams and see what others are doing

The housing staff highlighted the joined-up working between NRT and The Hub. With both offering to do weekend and evening calls to relieve housing officers.

For care, the launch of Wheatley Care during lockdown presented its own challenge - creating a new company, and a joined-up culture in the midst of the pandemic. While a challenge, it was seen as a success.

The fact that COVID numbers are so low in Care was suggested as a sign that staff had worked well together to keep everyone safe.

What should the ET think about when they plan how to support customers?

There was a consensus in the group that the ET should continue doing what they're doing. They felt the support had been good and we should keep on the path we're on.

The Emergency Response Fund was singled out as something that should be factored into future plans. A Housing Officer had been able to buy a vulnerable customer a brand new washing machine when they had no money to do so, and they felt the fund was a brilliant asset.

Throughout the discussions there was feedback that the flexible working and the use of different ways of engaging with customers should be retained as well as the sense of working together.

3. Reward and Recognition

There were eight participants from across the Group including representatives from the NETs and DGHP and staff on furlough in this focus group.

Support during lockdown

There was a strong sense that everyone had pulled together during lockdown, forming good working partnerships and supporting each other.

Peer to peer support was highlighted as being very important – and regular team meetings and catch ups have been key for this. Comments included that some people by their nature / personality are more resilient and others perhaps needed more support.

Staff said their managers had been a great support, with those who needed to, being able to work flexibly to help meet their caring responsibilities for children or elderly relatives. This echoed the majority view in the survey and phone interviews.

Our NETs colleagues also reported excellent support, with their safety being taken care of through the supply of PPE, regular briefings with managers, as well as managers regularly checking in to make sure they were ok.

Current reward and recognition at Wheatley

Staff were asked to describe what they thought of Wheatley's staff benefits. "Excellent", "fantastic", "second to none", "brilliant", "love it", "amazing" and "even the little things like an eye test are great" were just a flavour of the feedback on the package available.

Staff commented that we can sometimes take it for granted and, since lockdown, they have a renewed appreciation for how well we are looked after when they compare it with friends and the organisations they work for. One person commented that friends are having to take wage cuts so we feel very lucky to have the package that we do.

Recognition for work done in lockdown

Those on furlough commended those who are 'holding the fort' and one person said they felt a little guilty about being on furlough.

Ideas for recognition included a big party, and awards ceremony or even a prize draw, but many ideas centred around getting people together again to share their experiences.

A common theme was that a simple thank you or personal recognition goes a long way – people remember that. One of the NETs said he received a call from Steven Gray to say thanks for all he was doing. He said he hugely appreciated that call and was buzzing for a week afterwards.

HR reported that staff who were self-isolating really appreciated their welfare calls, particularly in the early weeks. They appreciated the personal contact from their employer during a difficult time.

One attendee commented that one size doesn't fit all, and with so many staff across the organisation what works as recognition for one group doesn't work for everyone.

Other comments / issues

Staff spoke about the Family Hub and the wide range of things available. Staff felt it's a really good initiative and that there is something for everyone, from sports, cooking, baking and book club to family hour and 'space to speak' sessions for housing officers.

One furloughed member of staff did comment that despite feeling very in touch with the organisation and getting regular contact from their manager, they still felt a bit in the dark about when they might get back to work, and is very much looking forward to getting back to it.

4. Leadership and managing people

The focus group on leadership in lockdown brought together seven managers from across the Group including from housing, care, the CSC and business support. The aim was to look at experiences of leaders in lockdown and discuss the key considerations for the organisation as we move into the new normal.

Leaders' experiences

As part of the introductions participants talked about their experiences, with the main themes being:

- The use of technology and the support from IT has been fantastic
- Better connections and relationships with teams are stronger than ever
- We were able to adapt quickly and still delivered a quality service
- More time had to be spent supporting staff
- Challenges included striking a balance between supporting staff (including those on furlough) through difficult times and getting the job done.

What was different about managing and leading in lockdown?

The use of technology, (WhatsApp groups, and Zoom) to manage teams, rather than face-to-face, was discussed as being one of the major shifts. Having regular touchdowns with staff helped keep teams together and motivated. Leaders reported using these platforms for work and for social interactions too.

Most found that interpreting body language over video chat was hard and therefore it was challenging working out how people really were. Looking at body language was important to help you see if there was something not right with somebody.

Majority found you had to spend more time than you would normally managing people on the phone and having one-to-one conversations.

The CSC felt this was particularly important for staff morale.

For those with new staff or for new managers in a new post, it was harder than it would have been normally to build relationships.

Managing relationships remotely

Some found that scheduling regular catch ups (on zoom) was effective and allowed for better diary/time management.

Some found it very challenging managing deadlines and workloads, ensuring work and services were a high standard, while having to spend more time managing and supporting people using new and different channels.

There was discussion around how hard it was to have difficult conversations on the phone/on a screen. It was felt that these conversations would be best face to face and allow this to happen needs to be looked at as we go forward.

The wellbeing of staff and leaders (including dealing with mental and physical wellbeing in a remote working setting and isolation) has been and will continue to be important as we work remotely.

There was a consensus that managers and staff would all need to learn new skills and rules of engagement as we continue to work remotely and flexibly.

Some people had come to expect welfare calls and we now need to establish what our organisation's expectations are of how we interact, engage and deliver services in our new normal.

We should establish Wheatley leadership principles for a virtual workforce, defining/ redefining these for consistency.

The majority of leaders talked about how hard it has been to keep in touch with staff on furlough, that it was time consuming and often there wasn't anything to update them on.

Ensuring consistency of leadership and support for staff

Leaders talked about finding the balance between the demands of the job and of supporting people in new ways.

It was agreed we had been very good as leaders at responding in crisis mode but we now needed to move out of crisis mode and into Priority Management in our new way of working.

Trust was mentioned as a major factor for leading in future – trust in your teams, and to be trusted as leaders and this was seen as key as we move forward.

We should have forums for sharing best practice and experience among leaders at Wheatley.

There was also discussion about learning and development opportunities to support leaders to manage people in our new service model. Many thought the development of both staff and leaders to be able to think and work flexibly, to build trust and self-reliance and to problem solve was important.

The furlough challenge

Most leaders were concerned about supporting and managing furloughed staff both now and when they return to work as well as their wider team.

Furlough staff will have mixed feelings (disappointment about missing out, anxiety, feeling out of the loop etc) about coming back to work and there is concern about a divide in the workforce when they return.

Leaders were encouraged to get involved in helping to create the 'welcome back' sessions which were being developed.

Managers' role will be to help them re-integrate with a welcome back relevant to their teams while remaining mindful of staff who have worked through.

Report

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Lynsey Fotheringham, Head of Housing

Approved by: Olga Clayton, Group Director of Housing and Care

Subject: 2021 rent setting

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

1.1 This report seeks approval for the proposed approach to the 2021 rent increase and explains how we intend to consult tenants on the proposals.

2. Authorising context

2.1 Under the Group Authorising Framework, the Group Board is responsible for the Group rent setting framework. As part of this, the Group Board is responsible for agreeing rent increase parameters within which each Registered Social Landlord (“RSL”) Board has the authority to agree an increase.

2.2 The Group Board agreed that a base increase of 1.7% should be the basis of consultation with each RSL’s tenants, but with some element of variation taking into account individual RSLs circumstances.

2.3 The Group Board also agreed that a second option should be discussed with tenants, with tenants asked whether they would be prepared to pay higher levels in return for additional local investment.

3. Risk appetite and assessment

3.1 Our risk appetite in relation to business planning assumptions such as rent increases is open. This is defined as “*willing to choose the one that is most likely to result in successful delivery while also providing an acceptable level of reward*”.

3.2 In relation to the statutory requirement in consulting and engaging tenants on any rent increase, our risk appetite is averse, that is “*avoidance of risk and uncertainty is a key organisational objective*”.

3.3 The decision on rent increases involves striking a balance between the need to ensure financial viability whilst continuing to deliver services our customers tell us they want, and keeping rents affordable. We are also required under statute to take into account the views of customers before making final decisions on rent levels.

4. Background

- 4.1 Keeping rents affordable for our tenants remains one of our key objectives. The West Lothian Housing Partnership (WLHP) Board agreed at our July meeting to revise our financial projections to assume lower future rent increases.
- 4.2 It was agreed that the base assumptions should be revised downwards from 3.5% each year to 1.9% in April 2021, 2.4% in April 2022 and 2.9% from April 2023 onwards. The base assumptions would thereafter be reviewed annually during the rent setting process relative to our rent setting criteria with a continued focus on them remaining affordable. These revised assumptions were reflected in the updated financial projections presented to the Board in August.
- 4.3 This was reaffirmed at the Board strategy workshops, where the Board agreed to accelerate the 2.9% long term rent increase assumption (down from the previous 3.5%) from year 5 to throughout the life of the strategy as a strategic commitment.
- 4.4 Subsequent to this, and taking into account the continuing economic impacts of the pandemic, the Wheatley Group Board agreed that the general level of RSL rent increases for April 2021 should be reduced further, from 1.9% down to 1.7%.
- 4.5 As part of our commitment to ex-Barony tenants who voted to transfer to WLHP in the stock transfer ballot, their rent increase would remain at 2% for three years.

5. Discussion

- 5.1 Our annual rent setting exercise takes into account the four key areas in our Group rent setting framework:
- Affordability;
 - Comparability;
 - Consultation with tenants and service users;
 - Financial viability
- 5.2 On the basis of these criteria, the following rent increases a general minimum increase of 1.7% is proposed. This proposal has been developed based on consideration of the four areas in our rent setting framework as follows.

Affordability & Comparability

- 5.3 Our average rents, and those of other Group RSLs, for 2019/20 are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Group RSL average rents – March 2020 ARC return

RSL	1 Apt Ave Rent	2 Apt Ave Rent	3 Apt Ave Rent	4 Apt Ave Rent	5 Apt Ave Rent
Dunedin Canmore	£78.75	£84.87	£98.73	£111.87	£115.66
Cube	£70.17	£82.47	£97.58	£105.66	£120.01
WLHP		£83.97	£89.82	£97.89	£105.57
Loretto		£75.68	£87.81	£94.47	£114.19
GHA	£65.04	£79.21	£86.63	£101.67	£110.57
DGHP		£75.49	£82.32	£88.65	£96.54

- 5.4 Based on an increase of 1.7%, the average increases per week for different property sizes would be as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: average rent increases per week based on 1.7%

	1 Apt	2 Apt	3 Apt	4 Apt	5 Apt
Per Week increase	-	£1.43	£1.53	£1.66	£1.79

- 5.5 We engage directly with tenants each year through our independently conducted tenant satisfaction surveys. In the most recent survey in 2019, the percentage of tenants that felt that our rents represent good value for money had increased from 84% to 89%.

- 5.6 In considering affordability we have assessed our rents using the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (“SFHA”) Rent Affordability Tool. The percentage of net minimum wage income spent by different household compositions in different property sizes on average is shown below.

Table 3: Affordability analysis

House Size	Rent	% of minimum wage spend on rent						
		Single Person	Couple (1xPT, 1xFT)	Single Pensioner	Pensioner Couple	Single Parent +1 Child	Small Family (2 Children)	Large Family (3 Children)
Bedsit	-							
1 Bedroom	£ 80.14	28.8%	19.2%	26.2%	19.2%			
2 Bedroom	£ 86.83					24.0%	14.9%	
3 Bedroom	£ 94.26						16.2%	14.1%
4+ Bedroom	£ 100.51						17.2%	15.1%

- 5.7 Studies from various sources provide insight into what might be considered an “affordable” rent, although there is no clear consensus or agreed definition of the term. Shelter (2015) cited in the recent Scottish Government literature review of rent affordability have quoted a figure of 35% of net household income¹ as an affordability threshold. A UK Affordable Housing Commission report from 2019 noted that if rent is higher than 40% of net income², then more significant affordability issues may arise.

- 5.8 Table 5 below shows how WLHP rents compare with other social landlords in West Lothian.

West Lothian					
Landlord Name	1 Apt Average weekly rent	2 Apt Average weekly rent	3 Apt Average weekly rent	4 Apt Average weekly rent	5+ Apt Average weekly rent
Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association Ltd	£69.19	£80.37	£92.16	£103.47	£109.14
Dunedin Canmore Housing Association	£87.24	£80.56	£92.01	£105.30	
West Lothian Housing Partnership		£78.61	£84.05	£91.64	£98.84
Almond Housing Association Ltd	£54.53	£71.80	£80.45	£89.13	£101.17
Weslo Housing Management	£58.82	£71.26	£76.96	£83.93	£96.98
West Lothian Council	£62.44	£67.26	£71.26	£75.68	£80.90
Median Rent	£62.44	£75.21	£82.25	£90.39	£98.84
Average Rent	£66.44	£74.98	£82.82	£91.53	£97.41
Dunedin Canmore +/- Variance against Average	4%	7%	11%	13%	\
WLHP +/- Variance against Average	\	5%	1%	0%	1%

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rent-affordability-affordable-housing-sector-literature-review/pages/4/>

²

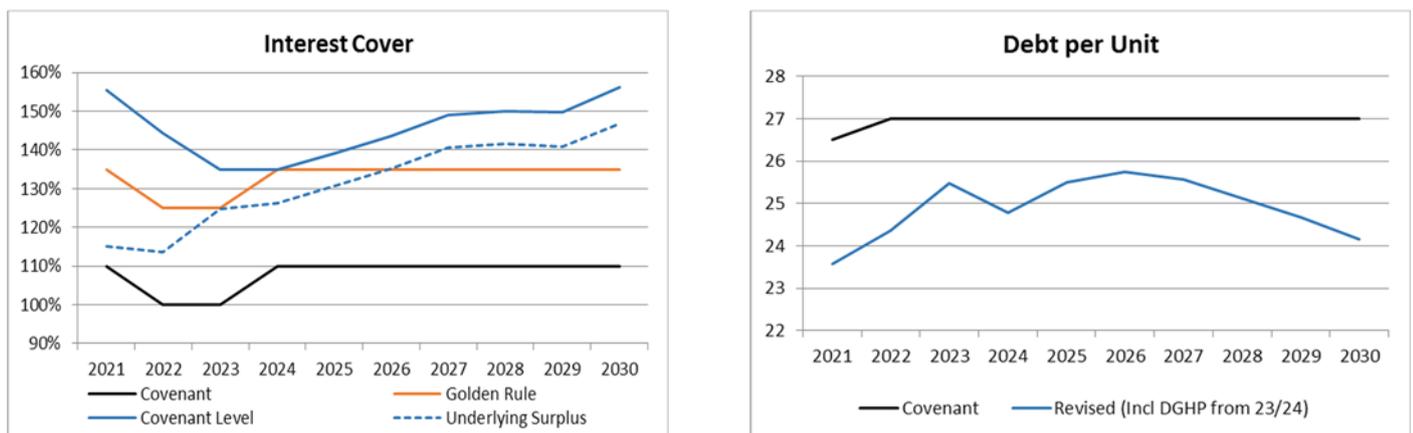
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b9675fc1137a618f278542d/t/5cf55923f41ae70001170311/1559583017920/Defining+and+measuring+housing+affordability.pdf>

Consultation process

- 5.9 This year's consultation will be necessarily more restricted as we work under government restrictions on gatherings. We will not be able to conduct the in-person focus groups that we have held in recent years. Zoom and other on-line platforms are limited in how effectively they allow large groups of tenants to constructively input, for example in group discussions.
- 5.10 We will therefore operate a 'standard' formal written consultation with all tenants from November through to January. It is proposed that to simplify the process this year we will reduce the number of options from 3 to 2. This is on the basis of a consultation booklet, in largely the form used in previous years. A draft of the booklet is attached at Appendix 1.

Financial viability

- 5.11 WLHP forms part of a borrowing group with other Wheatley RSLs. This means as a Group that we assess the key financial indicators of the RSLs aggregated together. There are two key indicators – debt per unit, which relates to our borrowing capacity, and interest cover, which measures whether our operating surplus covers our interest costs. These are both covenant measures in our loan agreements. Taking the rent proposals in this paper into account, the projected profile on these measures for the RSL Borrower Group is shown below.



- 5.12 The charts show that minimum headroom is maintained in line with our financial Golden Rules of 25% to the interest cover covenant and £50m to the debt per unit limit. The dashed line on the interest cover chart shows the position were all capitalised spend on fixed asset additions (other than off-the-shelf acquisitions of homes) to be included. This is the key measure of underlying break-even, and shows we continue to improve over the life of the new strategy.

6. Key issues and conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed rent increase would be the lowest we have applied, with the exceptions being the rent freezes agreed when joining Wheatley Group, and reaffirms our strategic priority to utilise financial efficiencies to minimise rental uplifts for tenants. They also reflect our increasingly refined approach to assessing affordability and comparability and, where there is a case for doing so, introducing an element of variation.
- 6.2 In line with our usual practice, general service charges will be increased in line with rents, except where different pricing adjustments are required based on specific service cost changes.

7. Value for money implications

- 7.1. The proposal aims to maximise value for money by further reducing our baseline rent increase as well as responding to properties where satisfaction with value for money is lower.

8. Impact on financial projections

- 8.1. As set out above.

9. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

- 9.1. It is a legal requirement under the Housing (Scotland) Act to consult with tenants on any increases to rents or service charges.

10. Implementation and deployment

- 10.1. As noted above.

11. Partnership implications

- 11.1. As noted above.

12. Equalities impact

- 12.1. None noted.

13. Recommendations

- 13.1. The Board is asked to agree that we consult tenants on a general rent and service charge increase of 1.7%, with the option given for 2.2%

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft consultation booklet

Investing in your community

Have your say on options for next year

Consultation on rent levels 2021/22



Have
your
say

Listening to you, and responding

This year has been a difficult and challenging time for everyone. At WLHP, we have been determined to support our communities in every way we can.

When the coronavirus crisis struck in March this year, we responded instantly. We invested significantly in new services to help people in need and in new ways of working that enabled our staff to be there to support tenants and their families 24/7.

Here are just some of the measures we put in place.

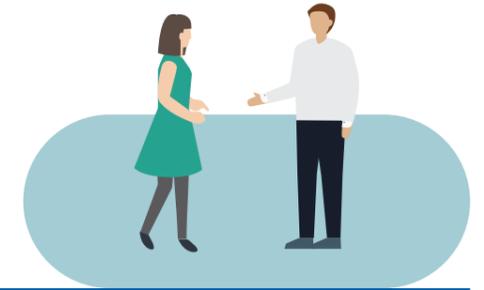
- ▶ We equipped our housing officers and customer service advisors to work from home, in line with government guidance, enabling them to help tenants every day by phone, text and online.
- ▶ Staff have made over 5,000 calls offering help and advice to WLHP customers since lockdown began
- ▶ EatWell has provided over 154 emergency food packages to people in need since the start of the pandemic. A supermarket voucher system, put in place a few months ago, has led to over 114 vulnerable households receiving £4,420 worth of food to date.
- ▶ Our expert welfare benefits advisers have been helping customers with Universal Credit claims and making sure they are getting all the benefits they are entitled to

- ▶ Our neighbourhood environmental staff have remained out and about in our communities through the pandemic carrying out fire patrols and removing bulk rubbish
- ▶ An emergency response fund was launched in March offering practical help to 42 customers in need, supplying everything from mobile phone top-ups to microwaves
- ▶ We've helped thousands of customers with prepayment meters to access fuel vouchers when needed
- ▶ Since it re-started in September, Home Comforts has continued to offer its services to provide free upcycled furniture and white goods to vulnerable households. If you need help, speak to your housing officer.

Of course government guidelines, and the need to put the safety of tenants and our staff first, meant we could only deliver a restricted range of our normal services. We have since been re-introducing our services, in phases, in line with restrictions and as it is safe to do so.

Despite all the challenges we've faced, we were able in 2019/20 to complete upgrades to bathrooms and heating systems.

Thanks to all of you who have given us feedback on the services in your community both before and during the pandemic.



We understand from your feedback that you want us to keep investing in homes and neighbourhoods. Many tenants have also told us the repairs service is the most important service for them and we're introducing more improvements to our repairs in the year ahead.

It's by listening to you and understanding what's important, that we're able to invest in your priorities and make sure our services are right for you, whatever life throws our way. Over the next year we'll be introducing new ways for you to engage with us and help shape further the future of services.

We know the pandemic and the challenges it has brought will be with us for some time. We remain committed to supporting our tenants and communities, now and through the uncertainties of the future. This booklet looks at how we can continue providing the services people need while investing in homes and neighbourhoods.

Proposals for next year's rents

We set out two options for next year's rent levels, explaining how each option would affect the improvements we could carry out in your area as well as the wider services and support to tenants.

Have your say

Please take time to look at the options on page 8 and have your say on rent levels for 2021/22. You can find out how to give your views on page 11.

What's inside?

- 4 What tenants tell us
- 5 How your rent was spent last year
- 7 Challenges for the year ahead
- 8 Your choices, have your say
- 9 Supporting you in difficult times
- 11 How to make your voice heard
- 11 What happens next?

What tenants tell us

At WLHP we want to deliver what tenants tell us is important to them. We engage with tenants in lots of ways including through focus groups, local community events, customer panels, surveys, social media and conversations with housing officers.

More recently we have also been engaging with people online, through social media and apps. Through the pandemic we learned this suits many people and we are looking to expand this further in the next year.

However you engage with us, we listen to all the feedback and use it to shape what we do and the services we deliver.

Many tenants who faced hardship or isolation during lockdown this year have told us that the support we provided was a lifeline for them and we want to make sure we keep supporting people so they have opportunities to make the most of their lives.

Tenants have also consistently told us that:

- WLHP should continue with improvements to homes like new kitchens and bathrooms
- we should look at more investment inside homes
- helping communities stay safe is important
- we should continue to work on keeping neighbourhoods clean and tidy
- repairs is the most important service.

We want to keep delivering the improvements you tell us you want.



How your rent was spent last year

We invested significantly in services to support tenants and families, particularly those facing hardship, those who moved on to Universal Credit and people who were alone and self-isolating.

Supporting our customers

Tenants tell us they value the range of wraparound services and support we provide. This is particularly true while the challenges of coronavirus and Universal Credit continue to affect our communities. Our services helped tenants:

- with welfare benefits, including those moving on to Universal Credit,
- put food on the table
- get furniture for their home
- find jobs and training opportunities.

Last year you helped us deliver a huge range of improvements to homes, neighbourhoods and services. This was in line with what we set out in our five-year plan Investing in our Futures, which was shaped by tenants' views. Here are some of the things delivered last year.

Improvements to homes

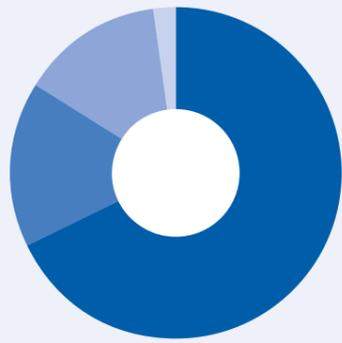
Tenants told us how much they want to see continued investment in homes and communities. We invested £290k in our tenants' homes and communities including new high efficiency boilers, upgraded bathrooms and new smoke detectors.

New homes

Tenants told us they wanted to see more affordable homes for rent. WLHP built 83 new affordable homes over the year, all of which were for social rent.

Challenges for the year ahead

Breakdown of how each pound was spent



- 68% Investment and maintenance
- 16% Staffing and administration costs
- 14% Funding new homes
- 2% Activities supporting communities

Improving neighbourhoods

Tenants also let us know they wanted us to continue to do more to keep neighbourhoods safe, clean and tidy. Wheatley's Community Improvement Partnership continued to work with WLHP communities to tackle anti-social behaviour, crime and fire safety.

Repairs service

We continued our work to improve our repairs and maintenance service. We were delighted that tenant satisfaction with the service reached 94%. We also kept completed 96% of repairs right first time. We had to introduce a restricted repairs service while we prioritised the safety of our staff and customers during the pandemic. We're committed to introducing a full repairs service as soon as it's safe to do so.



The pandemic has had a significant impact on our business, tenants and communities. Like all social landlords we have had to adapt the way we delivered services to take account of the restrictions in place. Our priority has always been the health, safety and wellbeing of tenants and our staff.

We are working hard to return services, such as repairs, investment in homes and new build to full capacity but this will remain a challenge as restrictions remain in place.

The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the economy and we know a challenge will be how we support tenants and communities adversely impacted. We will be increasing the level of support available to all tenants and communities that so many tenants have told us during the pandemic they value highly.

We have continued to work hard to reduce costs in recent years with our management costs now lower than the Scottish and UK averages. We have used these savings to allow us to keep the proposed rate of increase as low as possible and this year it is proposed as 1.7%.

How we compare with others

Our average rents

Average rents at WLHP are in line with the average for social landlords in West Lothian and in Scotland.

Lower operating costs

Our operating costs per home are below the Scottish median.

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction with WLHP remains high at 95%.

> 95%

Your choices, have your say



Here we set out a number of options for your proposed rent levels together with what these options would mean for services and improvements.

1. Increase rents by 1.7%

Increasing rents by 1.7% would mean we could keep delivering all the services we provide to you and your family, carry out all investment work already planned for homes, keep communities clean and safe and provide a range of support for tenants who need it. We would also continue to offer 24/7 customer service and carry out further improvements around fire safety which will be required by law.

2. Increase rents by 2.2%

Increasing rents by 2.2% would mean we could keep delivering services and all the investment work already planned. In addition, we would also be able to carry out further improvements to homes and neighbourhoods. These improvements would be based on what tenants tell us are priorities. They could include: new doors new floorboards and skirtings better lighting or paving round homes upgrades to backcourts and bin stores anything else tenants thought was a priority.

Giving your views

In the attached survey, you can tell us which option you support and what your priorities for investment would be. The survey also gives you an option to let us know if you don't agree with any of the options. Our Board would take account of this, together with the need to continue delivering services and improvements, before making a final decision on rent levels.

If option 2 went ahead, we would gather tenants' views on their priorities for additional investment. Our Board will listen to that feedback before deciding how the funding is spent.

£88.88

WLHP average weekly rent

Supporting you in difficult times

Keeping on top of bills and running a home can be difficult at the best of times.

We understand many people are facing challenges as we continue to live with the impacts of coronavirus. Please be assured we are here to help all tenants save money and support them to keep on top of their rent and other household costs.

Remember **TALK TO US**. The sooner you get in touch, the quicker we can help.

Check out the many ways we can help tenants save money.

MySavings

Tenants who sign up for an online account can enjoy savings of up to 10% on everyday shopping bills. Register for MySavings and get money off everything from food and clothes to cinema tickets, gym membership and takeaways.

Fuel advisors

Worried about rising gas and electricity prices? Don't stress. Our fuel advice service helps tenants get on to the lowest tariffs, arrange low-cost repayments and, in some cases, get debts written off. Last year tenants across Wheatley Group saved more than £500,000 on their energy bills.

Home Comforts

Buying furniture can be expensive. Our Home Comforts scheme helps make a house feel like a home - without spending a penny. In 2019/20, we recycled 780 pieces of unwanted furniture and passed them to tenants across Wheatley Group who needed extra help.

EatWell

Struggling to put food on the table? Eat Well supports tenants who face real hardship and who may be forced to turn to food banks. More than 1000 tenants across Wheatley Group got support from Eat Well last year.

Welfare advice

Our welfare benefits advice team have helped tenants across Wheatley Group claim more than £8.6m last year in benefits and tax credits they were due. We can help you too.

Universal Credit advice

We help tenants make a Universal Credit claim and offer support until the money comes in. We also help tenants get online, set up an email address, manage money and open a bank account.

Budget planner

Do you know how much it costs to run your home? How much is left over after paying rent? Our household budget planner can help.

Work and training

Want to apply for work, but struggle to fill in online forms or write a CV? We can help you get ready for work. We also have great training and job opportunities for people of all ages. In 2019/20, Wheatley Group created 788 jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities.



How to make your voice heard



You can have a say on rent levels for next year by completing the attached survey by Monday, 18 January 2021. But that's not the only way to make your voice heard.

You can also:

- Have a chat with your housing officer with your feedback
- Email us at talk@wlhp.org or
- Call us on **01506 416 438**.

What happens next?

We will collect all the views from the survey and other conversations with tenants.

The WLHP Board will consider all the feedback before making a final decision on rent levels for 2021/22.

We will let you know the results of the consultation and the final decisions made about spending priorities and rent levels on our website www.wlhp.org. We'll also report on the progress of the work carried out through the year.

We will let you know what your new rent for 2021/22 will be by letter. Your new rent will be due from April 2021 onwards.

Wheatley Group, Wheatley House,
25 Cochrane Street, Glasgow, G1 1HL
www.wheatley-group.com



Report

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Lynsey Fotheringham, Head of Housing

Approved by: Olga Clayton, Group Director of Housing & Care

Subject: Business and remobilisation update

Date: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

1.1 This report provides an update on our response to the impact of the current Coronavirus crisis on our services, partner organisations, their tenants and communities.

2. Authorising context

2.1 The activities addressed in this report are principally of an operational nature, and are therefore delegated to the Group CEO under the Group Standing Orders. The Board has been kept regularly apprised of our progress through email updates.

3. Risk appetite and assessment

3.1 The unprecedented nature of the current situation raises risks in a number of key areas. These include:

i. *Customers* - risks that our customers may suffer hardship and distress, not just through the risk of catching or through having the virus itself, but through the current government measures causing other effects such as hunger, isolation and mental and physical health problems

ii. *Staff* - risks that staff are exposed to the virus, especially those engaged in customer-facing activity; that we have a reduced workforce due to illness and/or self-isolating, and that those working from home may not be able to function effectively

iii. *Financial viability* - risks to our financial position, such as increasing rent arrears and reduced cash flow

3.2 These areas and the steps we continue to take to mitigate the risks are addressed below.

4. Background

- 4.1 This report provides a further update to Board members on our contingency operations to support both essential business and the new issues faced by West Lothian Housing Partnership (WLHP) and tenants. It outlines our current remobilisation status across key customer facing areas.
- 4.2 Remobilising in the face of a pandemic continues to be challenging. As Covid cases rise and restrictions change regularly we have to be extremely agile in amending and delivering our ongoing services, restarting those which have stopped and creating new delivery models at pace. As we change our approach we are ensuring robust communication with our staff and customers who need to understand what we are doing, why and to be reassured that our processes keep them safe. Despite these challenges we have continued to deliver our remobilisation plans and meet the targets we have set for these.

5. Discussion

- 5.1 Throughout the pandemic we have continued to provide essential services to our customers. Over the summer we have steadily scaled up the provision of services as restrictions have allowed. In the last few weeks, restrictions have begun to increase as numbers of cases rise. Our remobilisation plans reflect these changes and are deliberately agile to respond to new changes as and when they happen.
- 5.2 This report covers a number of key services including letting, rental income, homelessness, care, repairs services and our environmental services.

Letting

- 5.3 We recommenced phase 2 of our lettings plan on 17 August, two weeks earlier than we had originally anticipated would be possible. Phase 2 involves letting homes which do not have major repairs, including those which have been vacant through lockdown, which are being returned from lease arrangements with local authorities and those which have recently become void. It also includes managing letting of homes which were on offer prior to lockdown but had not yet been let. In addition to completing moves for households who had their offer put on hold during lockdown we are focusing on lets to homeless households and other priority groups.
- 5.4 We have let 23 in the year to date. In addition to the 8 new build lets previously reported we have let 6 properties to West Lothian Council to assist in reducing homelessness. Five properties were on offer prior to lockdown which have now been let; two of these lets were to homeless customers. A further 4 properties have been allocated to homeless customers nominated by West Lothian Council. We currently do not have any unallocated void properties and our approach to new voids is business as usual with allocations being made to those in priority groups.

Rental income

- 5.5 Maintaining our rental income so that we can continue to provide services, alongside supporting our customers to be able to pay their rent have been key priorities through the pandemic. Housing officers continue to successfully operate our virtual model of support through telephone and digital contact. They have quickly integrated this with our home visit teams to maximise the impact of these visits. This contact has enabled us to provide support and advice to customers at the point they need it most. It has been backed up by easy digital methods to pay which avoid unnecessary contact, with housing officers again providing support to help customers through the process.
- 5.6 WLHP gross rent arrears are currently 3.21%; an increase of 0.87% since our 2019/20 year-end position. Further detail on our rent arrears performance and our plans to achieve an on target performance at year end are included in the performance report.
- 5.7 Around 90 visits have been carried out resulting in 31 face to face contacts to support customers with arrears. Changes to furlough arrangements and further restrictions in the hospitality industry mean the financial position for many of our tenants will remain uncertain. As such, there has been a particular focus on supporting customers on furlough and those at risk of unemployment. Housing Officers have clear visibility of the remaining 4 customers affected by furlough and will continue to monitor the situation.
- 5.8 Welfare benefits advice, support with Universal Credit claims and the full range of wrap around services will be available to these customers if they need it. Our close contact with them means that this assistance can be provided early, before arrears grow too high.
- 5.9 We continue to engage with our partners in the local authority regarding what financial assistance is available to benefit our customers.
- 5.10 Phase 2 commenced at the beginning of October. Following the Government's acceptance of the Homeless And Rough Sleeping Action Group's (HARSAG) recommendations we now know that the 6 month notice period for Notice of Proceedings and evictions has been extended to 31 March 2021. We have therefore developed a revised escalation process with a new set of customer letters. This includes the potential to escalate to Notice of Proceedings where we are satisfied that the household won't pay rather than can't pay. This will only be done following a review of each individual case, including an assessment of any covid-19 impact and any potential vulnerabilities. We currently have 2 customers with rent arrears of over £1,000 and no known vulnerability.
- 5.11 We will have clear messaging for customers, stakeholders and staff around our escalation processes. This will make it clear that only tenants who repeatedly don't pay rent, have defaulted on an agreed repayment plan and repeatedly failed to engage with us would receive a letter about further action being taken. We won't evict anyone who falls into difficulty as a result of the impact of Covid-19 however it is important that those who are purposely not paying their rent understand they are in breach of their tenancy conditions and the consequences of this. We need customers to get in touch with us as quickly as they can so that we can help before the issue gets less manageable.

- 5.12 We will review our cases currently sisted at Court and for ‘won’t pay’ cases that have significant and increasing arrears, we will consider recalling the case to seek Decree. The use of bank and wage arrestment is a new part of our approach as outlined to the Board previously and this process is now underway.
- 5.13 There have been many positive examples of how we have supported customers to ensure they receive all the income they should be entitled to, sometimes involving extensive work by our teams across a range of other organisations. The following case studies give an example of the work done:
- A call to a customer regarding a failed direct debit uncovered that the household hadn’t claimed any benefits following the birth of their child. The Housing Officer made a referral to the Welfare Benefits Advisor (WBA) who confirmed that the household were not only entitled to Child Benefit but had an underlying entitlement to Universal Credit. The household will be better off by approximately £480 monthly.
 - A Welfare Benefits Advisor also assisted a customer to challenge a decision that he no longer qualified for Personal Independence Payment. After talking directly to the DWP officer dealing with the mandatory reconsideration the WBA successfully managed to have the customer’s previous award increased which will also lead to an increase in Employment and Support Allowance. This equates to a total increase in income for the customer of over £120 weekly.
 - A further example of joint working resulted in a customer being awarded Universal Credit 6 months after initially applying. The process required considerable input from Housing Officers, interpreters and the successful liaison of the Welfare Benefit Advisor with local DWP officers. The customer is now receiving their full entitlement to welfare benefits.
- 5.14 Further actions include our rent campaign which will this year be tailored to the particular issues around Covid-19; further enhancements to web self-service to allow secure messaging by digital means; and work to help our staff maintain their focus on income including refreshed toolkits, visual measure boards and video messaging.

Homelessness

- 5.15 We continue to prioritise lets to homeless households as part of our letting remobilisation. Excluding our new build lets, which were for customers aged 55+, in the year to date more than 46% of lets have gone to homeless households with a further 40% going to West Lothian Council to use as temporary accommodation. The % of lets to homeless households is expected to rise over the coming months as some of our initial lets had been offered to households prior to lockdown and so could not be offered to homeless households.
- 5.16 Across Group we have created 158 Housing First tenancies so far with another 11 in the process of being matched to suitable accommodation. These are spread across 3 local authorities with 116 in Glasgow, 38 in Edinburgh and 10 in West Dunbartonshire. Discussion is on-going with West Lothian Council regarding the creation of Housing First tenancies within our stock.

- 5.17 Further to the floods experienced by our customers in Pyothall Court, Broxburn, 7 were unable to remain in their homes. Two have been accommodated in void properties within our stock with a further three having been moved to properties provided to us by West Lothian Council. One customer is living with family awaiting a suitable property nearby and another has chosen to stay with family throughout the duration of the reinstatement works. We are currently liaising with our insurers and contractors.

Other Wheatley 360 services

- 5.18 Group's Fire Safety Team returned to home visits at the end of June as part of phase 2 of their remobilisation. They, along with the Home Safety Team, continue to provide support and guidance to staff and customers when required.
- 5.19 Close cleaning services resumed at the end of September. The teams are working through closes on a priority basis. We have already seen an increase in positive feedback from customers who are relieved to have this service back.
- 5.20 Around 80 anti-social behaviour cases have been recorded on our Streetwise system in the year to date. This is an increase of 248% on the same time last year and is mostly driven by noise nuisance disturbances. Further detail on the cases is included within the performance report.
- 5.21 We continue to use the expertise and guidance of our colleagues in the Community Improvement Partnership in dealing with these cases.
- 5.22 The Scottish Government has recently indicated that it may review the timescales for evictions in anti-social behaviour cases (these were extended at the start of the Covid-19 outbreak) and returned them to the pre-Covid arrangements.

Customer support

- 5.23 In addition to our core services we continue to provide support to our customers through our wraparound services and through our specific provision during Covid. Although our housing officers continue to be based primarily from home our home visit team have made 200 doorstep calls for a range of issues including welfare checks, gas servicing and rent.
- 5.24 Our Home Comforts service restarted at the end of September. We were able to utilise this to secure a double bed and a microwave for a homeless customer nominated to us by the Council. The customer had no furniture or means to purchase any however these items helped enormously whilst waiting for his Scottish Welfare Fund application. The Eatwell service available to customers now also provides the option of vouchers for customers which gives them more choice and is also more efficient.
- 5.25 Our Wheatley emergency fund continues to help customers in crisis situations. As with Eatwell, numbers are reduced but the help we are able to give is often crucial to the receiving households. Housing officers are also often crucial in picking up where households are struggling and in marshalling the right services to support them. Some recent examples include:

- A customer with high pay as you go energy charges contacted her Housing Officer as she was struggling financially and had no money for top-ups. A referral was made to a Fuel Advisor who arranged for an emergency fuel voucher, contacted the customer's supplier to ensure she wasn't cut off and applied for a Warm Home Discount which the customer will receive early next year. The customer was very appreciative of the support provided.
- During a call to her Housing Officer a customer advised that the wheel of her child's buggy had been damaged whilst in the store as it was too heavy to carry up to her flat on the 4th floor. The customer didn't have the means to repair the buggy or purchase a new one due being unable to work under COVID-19 restrictions. The response fund organised the purchase of a lightweight buggy and got it delivered to her door. This allowed her to get out and about with her young child and get some much needed fresh air during lockdown.

Repairs, Investment and Compliance

- 5.26 We have continued to provide our repairs service through lockdown, focused initially on emergency repairs and then extending this to include safety first repairs as lockdown eased and operating procedures were developed. More recently there has been a gradual increase in the volume of repairs carried out as we have looked to address works our customers consider essential.
- 5.27 Having addressed the backlog of voids built up as a result of the pandemic, this aspect of the service is now operating as usual, albeit with some limitations centring on material availability, social distancing restrictions and trade operatives returning from furlough.
- 5.28 Our Cyclical Maintenance programme is being reintroduced from October as planned. Our focus is on mainly external work that can be done whilst maintaining social distancing measures. All cyclical projects will either be pre-emptive works which will prolong the life of our assets or work required under legislation.
- 5.29 Gas Servicing has successfully been running at full capacity for the past 7 months and some compliance works (Smoke and Heat Detector Programme, Emergency Lighting and Periodic Electrical Inspections) have been in place throughout. As of early August 2020, we have been in a 100% compliant position with no expired gas certificates across WLHP. The focus has now moved to building in an element of contingency into the gas process as we transition back to our business as usual position. Our central call-out team and housing visit teams are continuing to arrange access and support customers across all subsidiaries through the various restrictions that remain in place as a result of COVID-19.
- 5.30 Our investment works programme includes the replacement of boilers, windows and doors and is expected to commence in January 2021 with project development for this work recommencing in November. Planned works also includes some of the accelerated investment agreed as part of the ballot promises to transferring Barony customers. As expected, all works will be subject to available resources.

5.31 We have undertaken a review of the way in which we engage with customers for investment in recognition of the potential for apprehension amongst customers in allowing tradespeople into their home for prolonged periods of time, particularly for internal works such as the installation of kitchens, bathroom and windows. A new 5 step engagement process has been developed with a focus on providing our customers with assurance around the robustness of our approach to health & safety, with detailed safety information and FAQs provided to each customer as part of the project notification packs. Our asset staff will also contact each customer to answer any further queries they may have about the work and to seek a 'customer commitment' to allow the work to proceed. This process will ensure that our customers are fully informed in advance of the work and will help to reduce the rate of no access or refusals.

5.32 Work will resume on all medical adaptations in November. We have one case outstanding and detailed engagement with the customer will be carried out to ensure that they understand the process for the repair and the procedures we will follow to keep them safe. This will include the options they may have to help with safety, for example staying or visiting somewhere else while the work is carried out if that is suitable.

Development

5.33 The Scottish Government has issued guidance on additional costs claims which have been incurred by contractors on construction projects as a result of COVID 19. Our contracts allow for extension of time but not payment for relevant events and therefore there is no contractual mechanism for payment of additional costs to the contractor.

- WLHP have two projects on site: - Jarvey Street and Almondvale
- Almondvale is progressing well since the recommencement of construction work; however the contractor is reporting ongoing knock on effects on the supply chain and the site had to temporarily shut for 1 day due to an operative testing positive for Covid. Procedures include social distancing and/or PPE; temperature checks are undertaken on each operative before they permitted to access the site. The impact on handover dates is being reviewed.
- Work is ongoing by City Building at Jarvey Street, with appropriate procedures in place for Covid-19 including social distancing and/or PPE measures. PPE measures have been recently expanded to include the wearing of face masks in common areas.
- We have two projects that are due on site at Linlithgow and Winchburgh. Both projects include an allowance for extension of time for Covid-19.
- Proposals are being prepared for a new opportunity at Winchburgh and are covered in a separate agenda item. It is anticipated that future projects will include for an allowance for time for COVID-19, if requested by the contractors/developers.
- COVID 19 Operating Procedures and are discussed and reviewed at each site meeting as a standard agenda item.

Ignite graduate programme

- 5.34 Group's Ignite Graduate Programme has again injected a new wave of graduate talent. We anticipate that WLHP will benefit from the experience that any Graduate placement would bring.

Care

- 5.35 Wheatley Care continue to provide support to all the people we work for. The redesigned service delivery models and support continue to operate including building based, face to face and telephone support. In a WLHP context this applies to customers living in our Buttries View, Mill Court and Templar Rise developments as well as the Tenancy Support Service (TSS). Significant work continues to be required to flex delivery models to suit revised national restrictions and guidance. This means that common areas and visiting in services has once again ceased following new restrictions announced in September.
- 5.36 Recent weeks have seen an increase in individuals displaying symptoms and requiring to be tested. To date no one living in environments where we have responsibility for has been diagnosed. There are staff temperature screening systems in place at building base facilities and staff bases. Procedures ensure that this is carried out before staff begin their shift or enter the building.
- 5.37 Care along with Health and Safety colleagues have established a flow chart and protocol for responding to these issues. The protocol sets out how managers and individuals affected should respond ensuring that we do not undermine or try to replicate the responsibility of the Scottish Government via their track and trace system while balancing our duty of care to employees. We continue to stress to employees the need to clearly explain any contact within the work place including our robust approach to social distancing, PPE and infection control procedures.
- 5.38 We are currently piloting an extension of Alertacall, currently used in Livingwell services across Group, with 4 mainstream customers and this will be evaluated early next year.

6. Value for money implications

- 6.1 We continue to work to provide value for money to our customers; prioritising their needs within the constraints of the limitations on staff movement imposed on us.

7. Impact on financial projections

- 7.1 Set out above. These will continue to be updated as the situation persists over the coming weeks and months.

8. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

- 8.1 As a Group we have maintained regular dialogue with the Scottish Housing Regulator over recent weeks, and they have appreciated our role, for example, in the housing sector National Resilience Group along with Scottish Government and local authority representatives, and our offer of support to smaller RSLs who may be unable to effectively deliver services in the current conditions.

9. Partnership implications

- 9.1 Through Group, we continue to utilise our strong relationships with Scottish Government, local authorities and national agencies to support delivery during the crisis but also to influence planning to the benefit of our customers and services. WLHP will continue to work closely at a local level to benefit local communities.

10. Implementation and deployment

- 10.1 Co-ordination of all Group activity continues to be led by the Group CEO. Deployment of local activities is led by the Head of Housing.

11. Equalities impact

- 11.1 None noted.

12. Recommendation

- 12.1 The Board is asked to note this update.

Report

To: - West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: - Brian Stewart, Director of Repairs, Investment and Compliance

Approved by: - Stephen Devine, Interim Group Director, Repairs and Assets

Subject: - Building Compliance Update

Date of Meeting: - 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

1.1 This report updates the Board on our building compliance work streams in the current COVID-19 pandemic and on our remobilisation plans.

2. Authorising Context

2.1 Under the Group Authorise/Manage/Monitor matrix, the Group Board is responsible for the on-going monitoring and scrutiny of our compliance with relevant legislation and regulation. This report provides the Board with an operational update and detail of actions which will be undertaken as soon as practically possible, given the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Risk Appetite and Assessment

3.1 Our risk appetite relating to building compliance work streams is “minimal” i.e. preference for ultra-safe business delivery options that have a low degree of inherent risk and only have a potential for limited reward.

3.2 Risks relating to repairs and maintenance are set out in our risk register. In addition, compliance such as for gas servicing is embedded in the Scottish Housing Regulator’s reporting requirements.

4. Background

4.1 Our Compliance planned work programmes include activities and events to households, Landlord controlled areas of premises (common areas) and Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO’s). Work programmes across each of these settings include Gas Servicing, Electrical Testing, Water Management and Hygiene (Legionella) and water temperature control measures and Fire Safety servicing relating to Fire Alarm systems, Dry Risers and Fire equipment. In addition, investment works include smoke and heat detector upgrades and emergency lighting testing and installations. HMO’s in particular, have a high level of Compliance activities and events due to the type and usage of the property in relation to legislative and licencing requirements and are also subject to external inspections and approvals from Local Authorities and Scottish Fire and Rescue.

- 4.2 Landlords have a legal duty to repair and maintain gas pipework, flues and appliances in a safe condition, to ensure an annual gas safety check on each appliance and flue, and to keep a record of each safety check.
- 4.3 Landlords also have obligations under legislation or approved codes of practice for a variety of building maintenance and inspection activities related to fire fighting equipment (risers/sprinklers), lifting equipment, alarm systems etc.
- 4.4 The national response to COVID-19, and in particular the need to minimise contact with others out with your household and for some customers to ‘shield’ has impacted business as usual approaches to compliance works. At the start of lockdown we introduced a life and limb repairs service and restricted our compliance works to critical services and planned preventative maintenance that could be undertaken within landlord controlled areas of premises.
- 4.5 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) HSE updated guidance to social landlords on gas servicing on 8 April 2020 and included criteria which must be evidenced should a landlord be unable to undertake gas servicing within appropriate timescales. Since lockdown, we have developed and introduced an interim gas servicing process. This process reflects the updated HSE guidance and allows us to complete gas services where access is allowed and it is safe for operatives to enter a customer’s home.
- 4.6 The status of our other compliance work programmes is shown below.

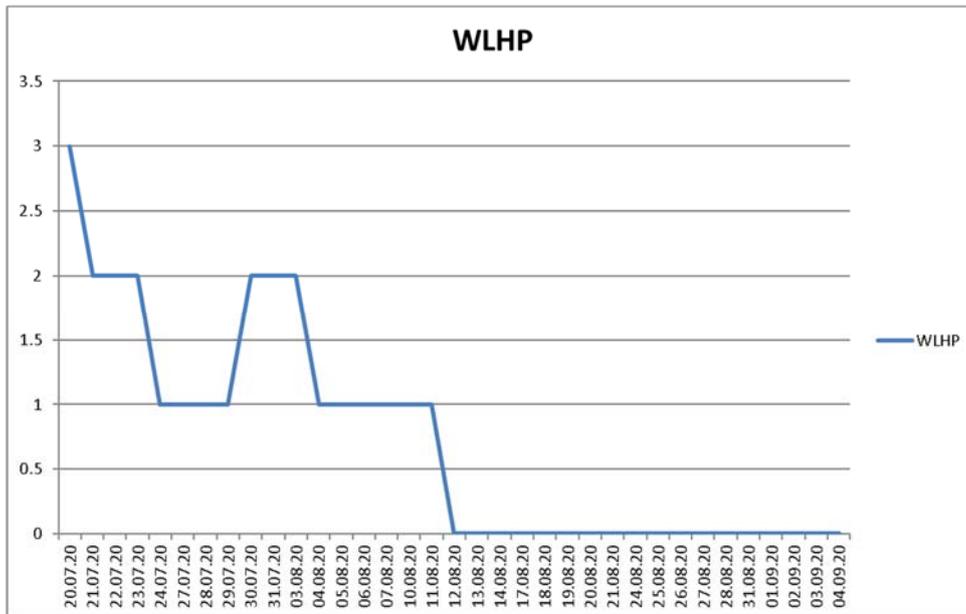
Work Stream	Covid Impact	Recommencement Date
TMV maintenance and Installation	Ceased	November '20
Smoke and Heat Detector Upgrades	Ceased	November '20
Emergency Lighting Installations	Ceased	November '20
Periodic Electrical Inspections	Ceased	November '20
Unvented Hot Water Vessels Inspections & Maintenance	Ceased	January '21
Lift Insurance Inspections	As Normal	As Normal
Proactive Lift Maintenance	As Normal	As Normal
Mechanical and Electrical Works	Statutory Compliance works proceeding within common areas and landlord controlled areas	Works within customers' homes recommenced October '20

5. Discussion

Gas Safety

- 5.1 The measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the early phases of lockdown had a significant adverse impact on our gas safety performance. Historically, we have had 100% gas safety compliance (i.e. no outstanding CP12s). In addition to full Compliance, Gas installations and appliances have been serviced and maintained to the highest standards while coupled with significant investment renewal programmes ensured stock was in optimum condition pre lockdown.

- 5.2 Our ability to undertake gas safety inspections between April to June was severely compromised because of the measures that were required to ensure customer and staff safety. This included moving from a more automated appointment based process to one where we explicitly asked permission to enter a customer's home. As might be expected, nervousness as the pandemic spread meant many customers were reluctant to give permission. In each case, the customer wish and our attempt to gain access were recorded in line with revised HSE guidance.
- 5.3 In May 2020, in response to customer nervousness and in recognition of the need for more proactive engagement to ensure access for gas servicing, we changed our gas service process. The key changes were the introduction of high intensity outbound calling from the Dunedin Canmore Gas Team (which provides this service to us and our customers). This ensured we were able to engage with customers directly with welfare calls developing a more customer focused dialogue in relation to the pandemic situation while positively relating the message for gas safety.
- 5.4 The early focus of this new approach was on Landlord Gas Safety Records (CP12s) certificates that had expired in April and May, or were due to expire in June. The approach had instant results with Dunedin Canmore Property Services (DCPS) reporting access rates for gas servicing reaching 93% at first visit compared to around 60% after first appointments, pre-pandemic. This approach has continued with the DCPS Gas team making over 3,500 outbound customer calls across the east so far.
- 5.5 In early July, as lockdown restrictions eased, our approach to proactively engaging customers was enhanced further through Housing Visit Teams. Staff from these teams have been visiting customers who were proving challenging to engage with to provide further reassurance in an attempt to facilitate access to their homes. Having these teams has also helped with the forced access process for those customers who, despite repeated attempts, have not engaged and allowed access. As a result, we achieved and have maintained full 100% compliance since 11th August 2020.



- 5.6 To ensure continued progress and resilience to any ‘second spike’ we will continue with proactive customer engagement to at least March 21. DCPS are currently reviewing their Gas Servicing programmes and are proactively aiming to move gas servicing cycle to 9 months (rather than the 10 months currently). This will maximise servicing in the months before winter and align cycles with the rest of the Group.

Legionella prevention and water management

- 5.7 Legionella testing is part of our overall water management strategy and is a year round programme. There were some delays in commencement/progress earlier in the year as adjustments were made during the early COVID lockdown, although we anticipate catching this up and all required works being complete this financial year. The focus since lockdown has been on communal tanks rather than individual outlets within customers’ homes.
- 5.8 Our testing regime varies on a site by site basis taking into consideration the water system installed, the type of property and the customer demographic. Works can include visual inspections of the tanks, 2 yearly risk assessments, temperature checks of both the water inlet and of resting water within the tank, bacterial testing which checks the water supply for various bacteria including e-coli and legionella and chemical testing for metal and mineral contents to ensure that water meets the relevant water quality standards as set by the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 2001.

5.9 The table below provides details of progress against the annual programme.

Subsidiary	Inspections completed so far	Inspections/Assessments Required	Total	Percentage completion
WLHP	3		0	100%

TMV Servicing

5.10 The table below provides the total number of households within this programme across Group.

Subsidiary	Qualifying Households
WLHP	64

5.11 Prior to COVID-19, this work was planned to run all year. However, in line with our agreed remobilisation plan, we now anticipate an 8-month delay in starting these works. This delay reflects the need for social distancing, the intrusive nature of these works, the potentially vulnerable customer groups within qualifying households (e.g. those containing under 5s or over 75s), and likely reluctance among some customers.

5.12 We currently expect to achieve around 100% of our original full programme this year due to the low number requiring inspections. Personal communication has been issued to each household offering advice and assistance as part of our stay safe approach. We have also advised they contact us should they require a repair or a check on their hot water, so we can prioritise any required work.

Smoke and Heat Detectors

5.13 This programme was originally planned to run for the full financial year. The planned start in November 2020 will mean we are unlikely to meet the Scottish Government's target date for completion of May 2021, with expected completion around the start of June 2021. We will monitor and manage progress proactively and look to prioritise resources where appropriate to ensure this is completed as soon as practicably possible.

5.14 As part of this, we will work closely with DCPS trades team to rationalise address lists for this with other Compliance work streams so we can accelerate programme delivery while minimising customer disruption, adopting a "one and done" where practicable. We will also use our learning from gas servicing on the value of proactive customer engagement where access is required, to ensure these works are completed as quickly as practical. Programme planning is at an advanced stage projecting installations around 150/week access permitting. Letters have been sent to each household offering advice and assistance as part of our stay safe approach, and also asking they contact us should they require a repair or a check on their existing smoke detectors.

5.15 The table below provides an update on completions, before work ceased.

Subsidiary	Stock No's	Total	Percentage
WLHP	742	415	55%

Periodic Electrical Inspections

5.16 In May this year, the Scottish Government updated its guidance to social landlords via the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS), requiring that periodic electrical inspections be undertaken in all properties on a cycle of no more than 5 years. This brings the social housing sector in line with guidance issued to the private rented sector in 2015. The Scottish Government has set the target date of March 2022 for Social Landlords to be compliant.

5.17 In relation to compliance and the work required to meet the March 2022 deadline, in the east we have/are:

- Since 2018, budgeted for periodic inspections on a 5 yearly cycle.
- 150 inspections due to elapse which were all programmed for the full 2020/21 financial year - 40% will slip into next year due to the time constraints resulting from COVID-19
- Aiming to accelerate the programme restrictions permitting, targeting 100% compliance by August 2021.
- Adopting “one and done” approach we practicable with other Compliance programmes.

Emergency Lighting Installations

5.18 Emergency Lighting installations and maintenance are undertaken within common areas of blocks, with no requirement to access customers’ homes. As such, this work stream can be recommenced in October through a combination of Dunedin Canmore’s in house teams and their supply chain.

5.19 Processes are already in place for notifying customers and colleagues that this work is going to be taking place, and due to the minimal level of direct customer contact involved in completing these works we do not anticipate significant issues with recommencing the programme.

Unvented Hot Water Vessels Inspections & Servicing

5.20 Inspections & Servicing are programmed for Q4 and we do not anticipate any issues with delivery due to the relatively low volume of inspections required.

5.21 Where practicable, the programme will combine with other similar type Compliance work streams e.g. TMV servicing to minimise Customer contact and to optimise resources.

Lift Inspections and Maintenance

- 5.22 Lift inspections by our insurance engineers commenced as normal throughout lockdown and any time related defects that are identified are being actioned by our lift contractors as a priority. Any minor defects or recommendations will be completed as and when business returns to normal
- 5.23 Proactive servicing of our lifts has been fully maintained at two monthly visits as per contractual obligations and therefore remobilisation will have no impact on this particular work stream.
- 5.24 All emergency callouts are being dealt with within timescales and there is continued dialogue with the contractor about any potential issues

Mechanical and Electrical Works

- 5.25 During lockdown our specialist M&E contractor and their supply chain have been working to undertake all statutory compliance works which are accessible within common areas of our blocks or within landlord controlled areas (tank rooms, risers etc.), this work includes water testing, dry riser testing, fire alarm maintenance.
- 5.26 All emergency callouts are being dealt with within timescales and there is continued dialogue with the contractor about any potential issues.
- 5.27 The majority of our M&E equipment is within communal areas of blocks, which has allowed our contractor to catch up quickly on workload that they were unable to undertake due to restrictions in lockdown with minimal inconveniencing for our customers.

Communications

- 5.28 Our experience through the COVID-19 pandemic and beginning to reintroduce services has highlighted the value of proactively engaging customers, particularly where there is nervousness about allowing access to their home.
- 5.29 As we continue to develop our approach to compliance activities in the current operating environment, we will further strengthen communications with customers at each stage to explain:
- what we are doing and why it's important;
 - how we will ensure the work can be carried out safely;
 - what we need them to do; and
 - how they can get in touch to talk to us.

5.30 Key messages in all our communications to customers on compliance will be:

- The safety of our customers and staff is our top priority and as a result we are still only able to deliver restricted services
- The good news is... the continued gradual easing of restrictions means we can now carry out some essential work aimed at keeping you and your home safe
- Please be assured, while this work is carried out, our staff and contractors will strictly follow guidelines on maintaining social distancing and will wear appropriate PPE
- This work is a really important part of keeping you and your home safe ...we'll be re-introducing other services just as soon as guidelines allow.

5.31 These key messages, supplemented where appropriate with detail of the individual project or work being carried out, will be communicated to customers using a range of channels including telephone calls, on-line, web and social media.

6. Key Issues and Conclusions

6.1 Where needed and appropriate we have amended our approach to compliance related works in response to government guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and changing customer attitudes. Throughout the lockdown restrictions, our emphasis has been on ensuring our customers, communities and assets remain safe while we work towards the phased introduction of our wider repairs and compliance services, as restrictions ease.

6.2 We have changed our approach to gas servicing, where we have statutory obligations, to allow us to meet recent HSE guidance to social landlords. Our new approach resulted in compliance of 100% on 11th August 2020. Our planned programme of other compliance work for TMV and smoke and heat detectors is behind plan – because of the difficulties in accessing customer homes. Other programmes including, Emergency Lighting, and Unvented Hot Water Vessels inspections and maintenance are impacted to a lesser extent by the current situation through a combination of requiring limited customer engagement, work having been planned for later in the year and the ability to move – on a temporary basis – to less frequent checks without significant risk.

6.3 While adapting our approach to compliance, and repairs more generally, has its challenges, it has also provided an opportunity to review our delivery model and to accelerate innovation including in addressing no accesses and collaborative working with our delivery partners.

7. Value for Money Implications

7.1 There are no direct value for money implications arising from this report.

8. Impact on financial projections

- 8.1 The revision to previously planned programmes of work discussed here have been included in updated financial projections.

9. Legal, Regulatory and Charitable Implications

- 9.1 In considering the current legal implications, we have regard to the dialogue that is continuing with key parties including the Scottish Government and SHR.
- 9.2 The amendments to the Scottish Housing Quality Standards in relation to Periodic Electrical inspections have required us to increase our electrical inspection programme to ensure we meet the target date of March 2022.

10. Implementation and deployment

- 10.1 Implementation aspects of the various compliance works are discussed throughout this report.

11 Partnership Implications

- 11.1 The consideration in this report apply to all group partners

12. Equalities Impact

- 12.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

13. Recommendations

- 13.1 The Board are asked to note the content of this report and agree the proposed approach to compliance related works.

Report

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Elspeth Lang, Development Manager

Approved by: Tom Barclay, Group Director of Property and Development

Subject: New Build Project Approval: Winchburgh Plot BB

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

1.1 To seek approval to add a development of 85 units (51 social rent and 34 mid-market rent) at Winchburgh (plot BB) to our 5-year development programme.

2. Authorising context

2.1 Under our Group Development Governance arrangements this Board has a strategic programme role, approving our rolling 5-year development programme. In agreeing the programme, the Board also agree parameters which must be met for each individual project.

2.2 The Group Development Committee is thereafter responsible for the implementation via the detailed scrutiny and project approvals where the proposed development is in the 5-year programme and meets the criteria. Any additions to the 5-year programme must be agreed by this Board and are subject to the normal project approval process via the Group Development Committee thereafter.

3. Risk Appetite and assessment

3.1 Our risk appetite for development is open; *“willing to choose the one that is most likely to result in successful delivery while also providing an acceptable level of reward (and value for money etc.)”*

3.2 The 34 mid-market rent units will be owned by us and leased to Lowther Homes who will let and manage the properties. As such WLHP will be responsible for the costs associated with acquisition, development, buildings insurance and components replacement.

3.3 Lowther Homes will provide the day to day advertising, letting and management of the mid-market rent properties and will be responsible for routine repairs, receiving rental payments, service charges, voids and compliance checks for the mid-market properties.

- 3.4 In line with current Guidance from the Scottish Housing Regulator and associated practice across the Group for mid-market rent projects where ownership of the properties is retained by the RSL, the lease between the RSL and Lowther Homes, will be treated as a “notifiable event” and intimated to the Wheatley Group Governance team. The terms of the lease which will be put in place will replicate the lease that is standard between RSLs and Lowther Homes at the time of completion.
- 3.5 The developer, Allan Water Homes Limited is bearing the risk, and cost, of obtaining all statutory consents, and will be responsible for planning gain payments (Section 75) to West Lothian Council. We have undertaken an up to date credit check for Allan Water Homes Limited. This confirmed that Allan Water Homes Limited are in a sound financial position with a ‘C-’ score. Missives will be in place to ensure that full unencumbered title to the site transfers to WLHP. To mitigate funding risk, contracts will not be concluded until we have received an acceptable offer of Grant.

4. Background

- 4.1 Winchburgh Plot BB is located in the Winchburgh expansion area. A plan showing site information including its location in relation to the wider area is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 The Winchburgh expansion project will provide over 3,400 new homes along with new schools, transport links, leisure facilities and amenities. A total of 750 affordable units are expected to be delivered as part of the masterplan, comprising 450 units for social rent and 300 units for mid-market rent or ‘other affordable’ such as discounted sale /low cost home ownership.
- 4.3 Winchburgh BB was previously intended as the location for a new school. The school has now been relocated and planning approval obtained for the site to be developed for residential. Once identified as residential, Plot BB was identified as a location for affordable housing. Our mixed tenure proposal for social rent and mid-market rent, therefore contributes towards the agreed number of grant funded affordable housing units in Winchburgh.
- 4.4 This opportunity represents the fourth affordable housing project proposed to be delivered in Winchburgh. In addition to WLHP projects, West Lothian Council has also delivered a social rent project in 2018/19, see table below.

Developer	Units	Tenure	Status
WLHP	55	Social Rent	Completed in 2018/19
WLC	41	Social Rent	Completed in 2018/19
WLHP	20	Social Rent	Due on site – January 2021
WLHP	85	34 MMR 51 Social Rent	To be considered

- 4.5 The opportunity at Winchburgh BB was advertised by the current land owner, Winchburgh Developments Limited. We supported the bid by Allan Water Homes Limited as well as bids by other contractors known to the Wheatley Group. Separate bids were also submitted by developers looking to develop the site for affordable discounted sale. Our joint bid with Allan Water Homes Limited was the successful bid. We assessed all development proposals from those bidders that we were engaged with during the bidding process (there were five in total), and we considered Allan Water Homes proposals the highest of all options we reviewed in terms of: delivery of the brief, quality of development, cost, housing mix and tenure mix.
- 4.6 Allan Water Homes Limited is a new developer to the Wheatley Group. It is a family owned property development company established in 1980. It is a growing residential developer with annual private completions planned to increase from 140 units to 350 units over the next few years. Current developments under construction are located in North Lanarkshire, West Lothian, Clackmannanshire, Fife and Stirling. Future developments are planned for East Lothian, South Lanarkshire, Perthshire and Glasgow.
- 4.7 Allan Water Homes Limited has completed two recent developments for Fife Council and is in discussion with Fife Council for a further two projects. This suggests that Allan Water Homes Limited:
- are a respected local contractor;
 - performed well on those contracts;
 - delivered a good quality product; and
 - is a contractor that we understand the Council would consider working with again.
- 4.8 As this will be the first project Allan Water Homes Limited has provided for the Group a number of measures will be included in the contract to ensure quality and progress against programme will be monitored. This includes use of an internal Clerk of Works, Contract Performance Bond and provision of Premier Guarantee Warranty.
- 4.9 West Lothian Council as the Strategic Housing Authority is supportive of this development opportunity in Winchburgh. The project has been included in the Strategic Local Planning Agreement for grant approval in 2020/21.

5. Discussion

- 5.1 There is high demand for affordable housing in Winchburgh and further demand is anticipated as the area considerably grows in size and additional amenities including a new spur from the M9 and a train station are planned to be added.
- 5.2 Our analysis of affordable housing in Winchburgh is that there is more than sufficient demand for both social rented housing in this location:
- WLC includes Winchburgh in priority area 1 for future investment in new build affordable housing along with Broxburn, Livingston, East Calder, Uphall and Linlithgow.

- All properties in WLHP's Winchburgh Phase 1 were let quickly and demand was good including applications from customers beyond the local area.

5.3 Available private rented opportunities in Winchburgh and its vicinity are limited, even though it represents a reasonably sized 9% of the housing stock. Housing market information provided by Rettie in July 2020 concluded that demand is anticipated for mid-market rent although not at a comparable level to Edinburgh city centre. Demand from younger singles and couples and families, particularly those with younger children, is anticipated.

5.4 The composition of the social rent and mid-market rent units are summarised below:

Type	Accommodation	Tenure	No of B/room	No of B/space	No
Flat	2a/2p cottage flat	Social	1	2	8
Flat	3a/4p cottage flat	Social	2	4	16
House	3a/4p house	Social	2	4	9
House	4a/6p house	Social	3	6	5
House	5a/8p house	Social	4	8	4
House	2a/2p cottage	Social	1	2	4
House	3a/4p cottage	Social	2	4	4
House	4a/6p cottage	Social	3	6	1
Total social rent units					51

Type	Accommodation	Tenure	No of B/room	No of B/space	No
Flat	3a/4p common access flat	MMR	2	4	24
House	4a/6p house	MMR	3	6	10
Total MMR units					34

5.5 The housing mix complements the house types already obtained for WLHP in Winchburgh and provides new house types including larger family homes and wheelchair cottages, not provided through our previous contracts.

5.6 The proposed social rents are consistent with the rents in comparably sized WLHP new build projects and the recently completed WLHP properties in Winchburgh.

5.7 The proposed rents for the mid-market rent properties take account of typical private rents in the Winchburgh area and are lower than the mid-market rents for the recently approved Linlithgow project reflecting differences in the private rented markets. The rents for the mid-market rent units are in line with Scottish Government funding criteria.

5.8 The design meets both our design standards and the Greener Standard. The price for design and construction has been subject to commercial negotiation with the developer. Applications for Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions (AMSIC) approval are planned to be submitted by the Developer in November 2020 to West Lothian Council, with a building warrant application to follow thereafter. Cost risk associated with the statutory consent process rests with Allan Water Homes Ltd.

5.9 Site purchase will follow approval of the AMSIC application and is expected to complete in March 2021, supported by Grant funding from Scottish Government in 2020/21. The construction programme is 25 months from acquisition generating a completion date of April 2023. The site lends itself to phased handovers of completed units.

6. Key issues and conclusions

6.1 The project represents a further contribution towards helping meet the Group's Asset Growth plans.

7. Value for money implications

7.1 The Group Development Committee will scrutinise the contract costs, in accordance with its Terms of Reference and the approach to development governance. Our Employers Agent, NBM, has confirmed that the amount agreed with Allan Water Homes Limited provides value for money and compares favourably to the current market, particularly given the numbers of family and wheelchair units being provided.

8. Impact on financial projection.

8.1 The individual project will be subject to a full financial review against the criteria agreed by the Board as part of the project approval review.

9. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

9.1 Legal support for this project will be provided by the in-house legal team and our external legal advisors where required.

10. Partnership implications

10.1 The project has been developed with the support of West Lothian Council who has included it within the current Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

10.2 Our housing management team and Lowther Homes colleagues have been consulted on the development and are supportive of the proposal.

11. Implementation and deployment

11.1 The Wheatley Solutions Development Team will manage the delivery of the project.

12. Equalities impact

- 12.1 The properties have been designed to meet requirements of Part 1 of Housing for Varying Need.

13. Recommendations

- 13.1 The Board is asked to:
- 1) Approve the addition of Winchburgh BB to the 5-year development programme; and
 - 2) Note that the project will be subject to approval by the Group Development Committee

List of Appendices:

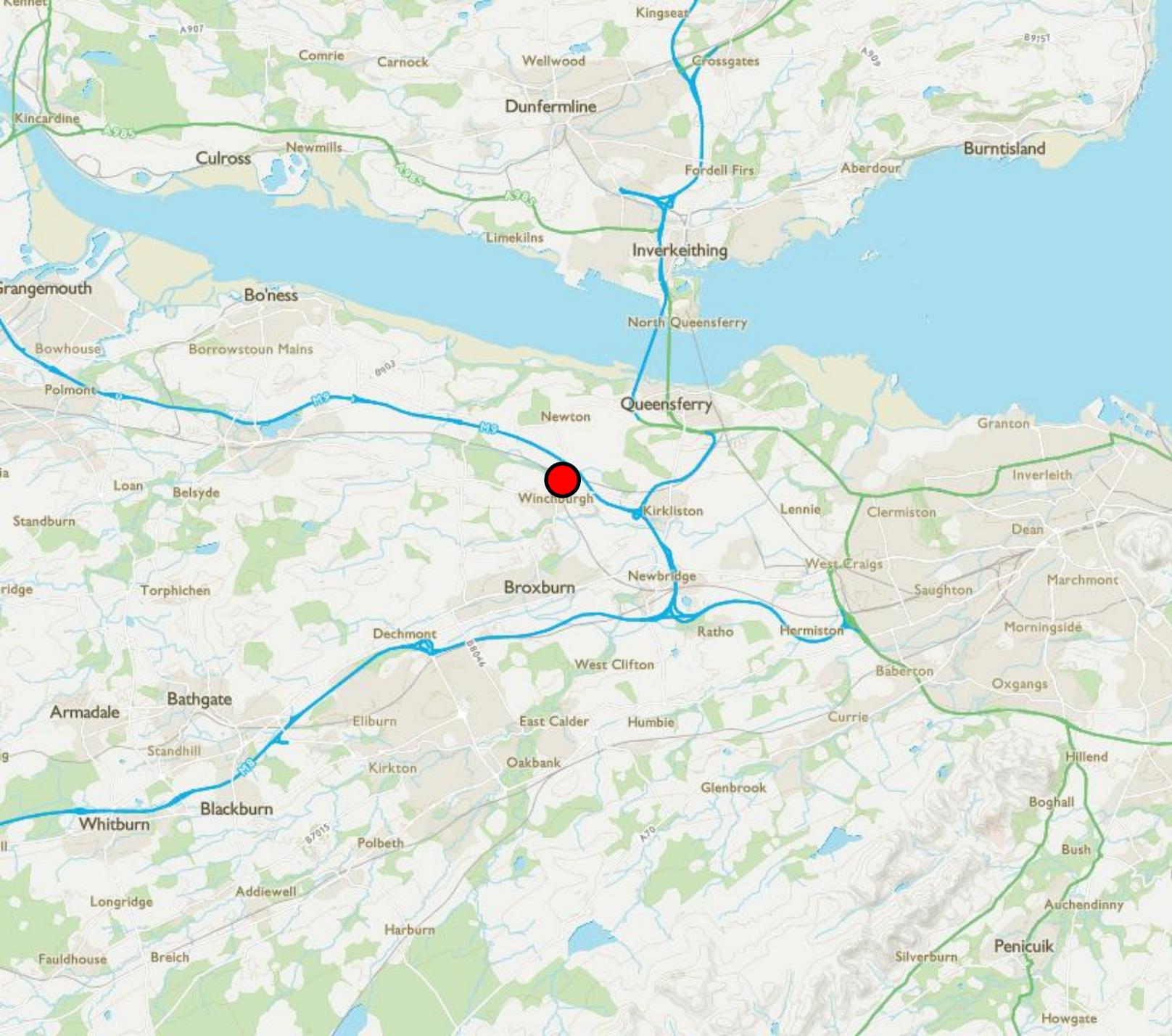
- Appendix 1:** Location Plan, layouts and visuals for the site

Winchburgh BB

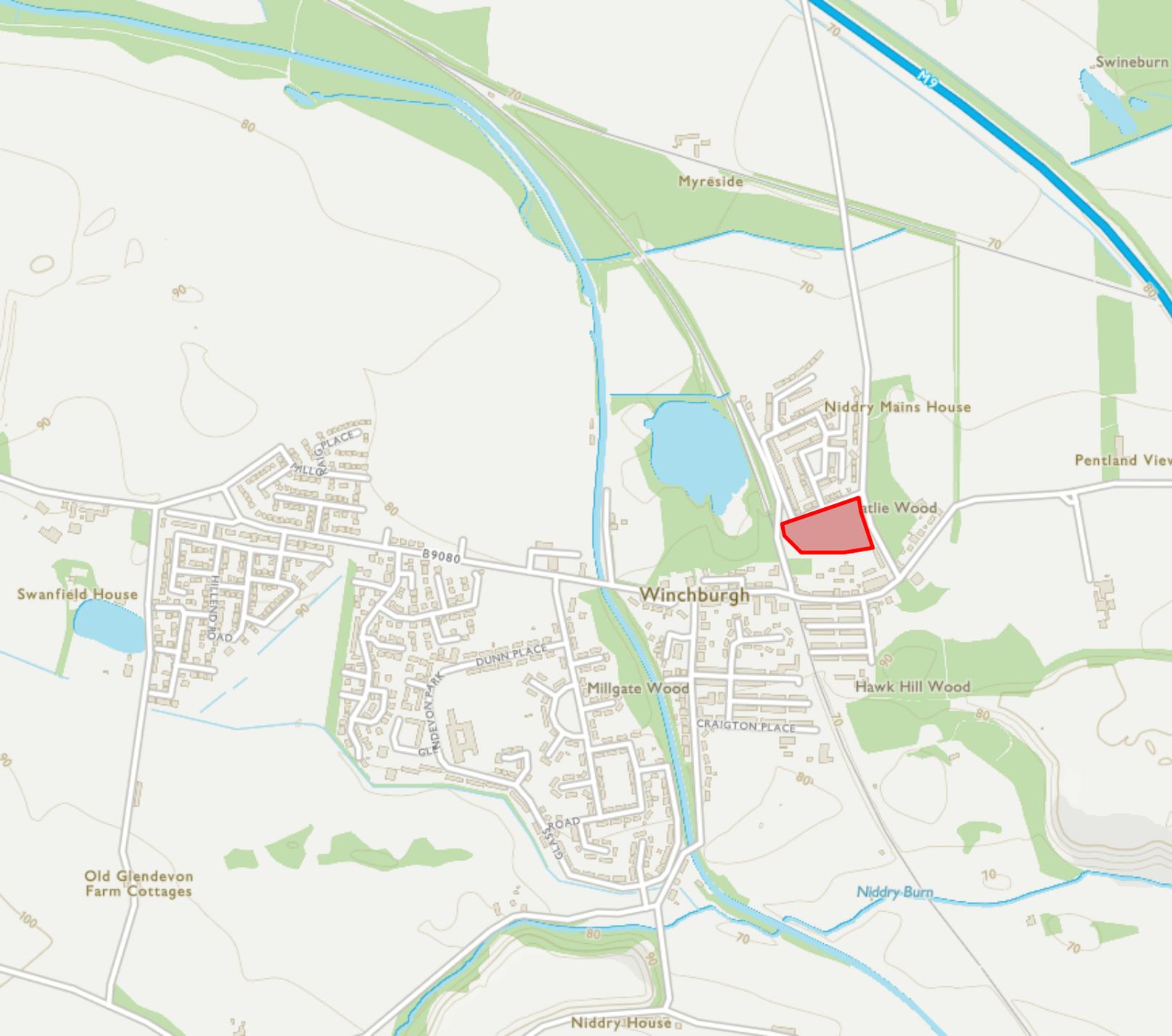
Appendix 2

West Lothian Housing Partnership Board
18 November 2020

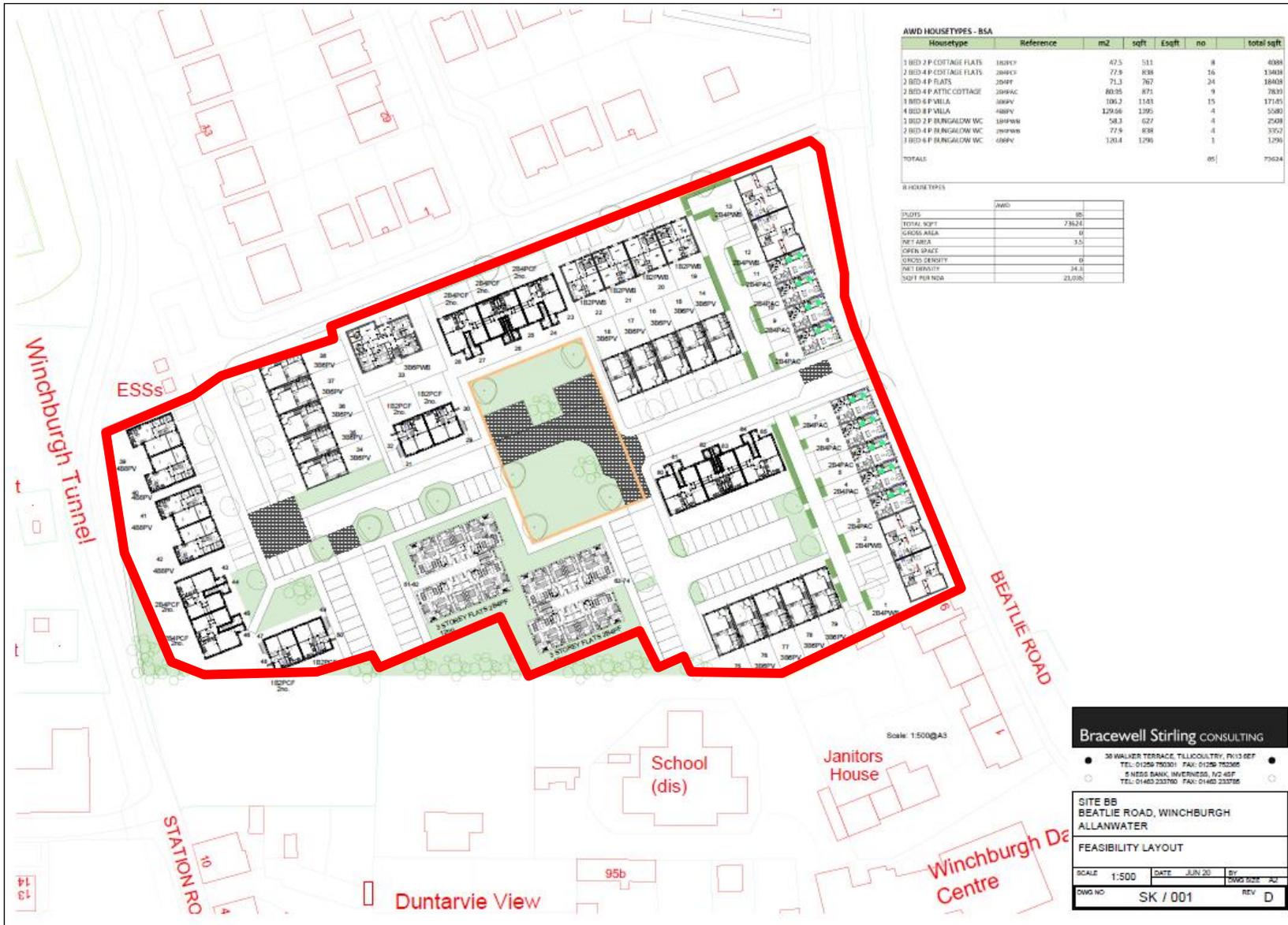
Winchburgh BB



Winchburgh BB



Winchburgh BB



AWD HOUSETYPES - BSA

HouseType	Reference	m2	sqft	Esqft	no	total sqft
1 BED 2 P COTTAGE FLATS	1B2PCF	47.5	511		8	4088
2 BED 4 P COTTAGE FLATS	2B4PCF	77.9	838		16	13408
2 BED 4 P FLATS	2B4PF	71.3	767		24	18108
2 BED 4 P ATTIC COTTAGE	2B4PAC	80.35	871		9	7839
1 BED 4 P VILLA	1B4PV	106.2	1143		15	17145
4 BED 8 P VILLA	4B8PV	129.66	1395		4	5580
1 BED 2 P BUNGALOW WC	1B2PBW	58.3	627		4	2508
2 BED 4 P BUNGALOW WC	2B4PBW	77.9	838		4	3352
1 BED 4 P BUNGALOW WC	1B4PBW	126.4	1366		1	1296
TOTALS					85	73624

8 HOUSE TYPES

	AWD	BS
FLOYS		
TOTAL SQFT		23624
GROSS AREA		0
NET AREA		3.5
COVER SPACE		
GROSS DENSITY		0
NET DENSITY		24.1
SQFT PER NDA		21.036

Bracewell Stirling CONSULTING

• 38 WALKER TERRACE, TILLCOUNTRY, P/13 6EP •
 TEL: 01259 783301 FAX: 01259 782505
 • 5 NEDS BANK, INVERNESS, T/2 45P •
 TEL: 01463 233760 FAX: 01463 233766

**SITE BB
 BEATLIE ROAD, WINCHBURGH
 ALLANWATER**

FEASIBILITY LAYOUT

SCALE 1:500	DATE JUN 20	BY	5590 5282 JZ
DWG NO. SK / 001		REV	D



Winchburgh BB



Report

To:- West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By:- Lynsey Fotheringham, Head of Housing

Approved by:- Olga Clayton, Group Director of Housing and Care

Subject:- Delivery Plan 2020/21 and Quarterly Performance

Date of Meeting:- 18 November 2020

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report is to update the Board on the Delivery Plan approach for 2020/21, seek approval of the associated targets and update the Board on our performance in Quarter 2.
- 1.2 The Group Performance Framework (“the Framework”) was approved by the Wheatley Group Board and is updated annually through the Delivery Plan. It sets out the approach to performance reporting across the Group.
- 1.3 This report outlines progress on the Delivery Plan Measures and Projects for Quarter 2. Appendix 1 contains the Performance Measures Dashboard and Appendix 2 provides progress on Strategic Projects.

2 Authorising context

- 2.1 Under the terms of the Group Authorising Framework, the Board is responsible for setting the overall Performance Framework and approving the delivery plan for each year. Under the Group Authorise/Manage/Monitor Matrix, the Board has an ongoing role monitoring performance against the key indicators agreed under the performance framework.
- 2.2 The Framework is a key mechanism for ensuring sound governance and provides:
- The basis for a continued drive to performance excellence;
 - A rounded view of strategic, operational and business plan information based on core measures but recognising the diversity of each Subsidiary; and
 - Strengthened Community Governance through enhanced tenant and customer scrutiny
- 2.3 This year’s Delivery Plan has been heavily impacted by the pandemic and on this basis the Board agreed a different approach to target setting, including the use of phasing.

3 Risk Appetite and assessment

- 3.1 Our agreed risk appetite in relation to Board Governance is “cautious”. This level of risk tolerance is defined as “Preference for safe delivery options that have a low degree of inherent risk and may only have limited potential reward”.

4 Background

- 4.1 We are in the process of refocusing our strategy, which will now cover 2021-2026. 2020/21 is an exceptional year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and as such, an interim set of performance measures and targets have been included in Appendix 3 for approval by the Board. This set includes the number of themes of our 2020-25 strategy, while recognising that normal performance has not been possible due to government restrictions.
- 4.2 As previously reported to the Board, Covid-19 has had a significant effect on business operations across the Group which has impacted on the delivery of the Group strategy. Updates on operational performance, and the risks associated with working in this environment, have been reported through the “Business Update” report previously reported to the Board.
- 4.3 We continue Group continues to review performance and key operational indicators are reported monthly to the Scottish Housing Regulator (“SHR”) to understand the impact of Covid-19.

5 2020-21 Measures and Targets

- 5.1 Prior to lockdown, we had already developed a draft set of measures and targets based on the first year of our 2020-25 strategy. We have subsequently reviewed these to evaluate the likely impact of Covid-19 on what is achievable this year and what is most important in light of some of the changes to the strategy currently under discussion. The full set of proposed measures and targets is included in the Appendices. Key points are set out below:
- 5.2 **Customer satisfaction:** The Scottish Housing Regulator requires satisfaction surveys to be completed every 3 years. Our last survey was completed in late 2019. As there is no statutory requirement to complete full surveys in 2020/21, we do not intend to complete full surveys this year. However, a separate piece of work is being commissioned to get independent feedback from our customers on how we responded to Covid-19 and obtain feedback on service delivery priorities as supported by the Board during our strategy session. This will be reported to the Board in due course.
- 5.3 **Phased targets:** to reflect the challenging environment we have been operating in so far this year, we propose to set phased targets for a small number of performance indicators based on the following phase

Phase	Timescale	Commentary
Lockdown/ phase 1	April – June	Targets adjusted to reflect the changes in our services – eg restricted repairs service.
Remobilisation – phase 2	July – December	Targets adjusted to reflect the remobilisation of services across
Business as usual	January – March	Assumed that all services are fully operational – this may need to be revisited in the event of second waves or local lockdowns.

- 5.4 These phases have been applied to the following areas and proposed targets developed for each phase. It is expected that these will require to be further reviewed in light of the new *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's Strategic Framework* which means Business as Usual is highly unlikely to resume from January as initially planned. A separate agenda item (presentation) will update the Board on the implications of the new Strategic Framework

Tenant satisfaction with repairs and maintenance: We anticipate in-month satisfaction to decline initially as more complex repairs usually result in lower satisfaction and there are more of these as we remobilise. Our “Phase 2” target is 87% and then the business as usual target increases to 93%.

Average Days to let: As we work through the completion of any repairs required to the backlog of vacant properties, the time taken to let properties will be longer in July – December (“phase 2”). Thereafter we expect to come back to normal levels.

Lockdown/ Phase 1	Remobilisation/ Phase 2	Business as usual
N/A – no letting	26	6.5

Medical adaptations (number of calendar days to carry out): We have 1 outstanding adaptation referral from the beginning of lockdown, which we aiming to do this month.

Phases 1 and 2	Business as usual
N/A	72

Number of expired gas safety certificates: We expect there to be no further expired gas safety certificates.

Lockdown/ Phase 1	Remobilisation/ Phase 2	Business as usual
8	0	0

- 5.5 **Gross rent arrears:** have been reviewed to reflect the economic impact Covid-19 has had on our tenants; which has seen a significant increase in the number of people claiming Universal Credit. As a result, our revised target for 2020/21 will be 3.1%
- 5.6 **Lets to homelessness:** to reflect the importance of this area whilst giving recognition to our turnover, it is proposed that we maintain our target of 50%
- 5.7 **Gas safety:** Our target remains at zero, as we have a legal obligation to carry out this service within timescales. However, in line with other providers, we begun to force access in July and August where people refuse entry (providing they are not shielding). A total of 8 properties had expired gas certificates. These numbers cannot be reduced because the indicator measures how many times the deadline has been missed.

6 Quarter 2 performance

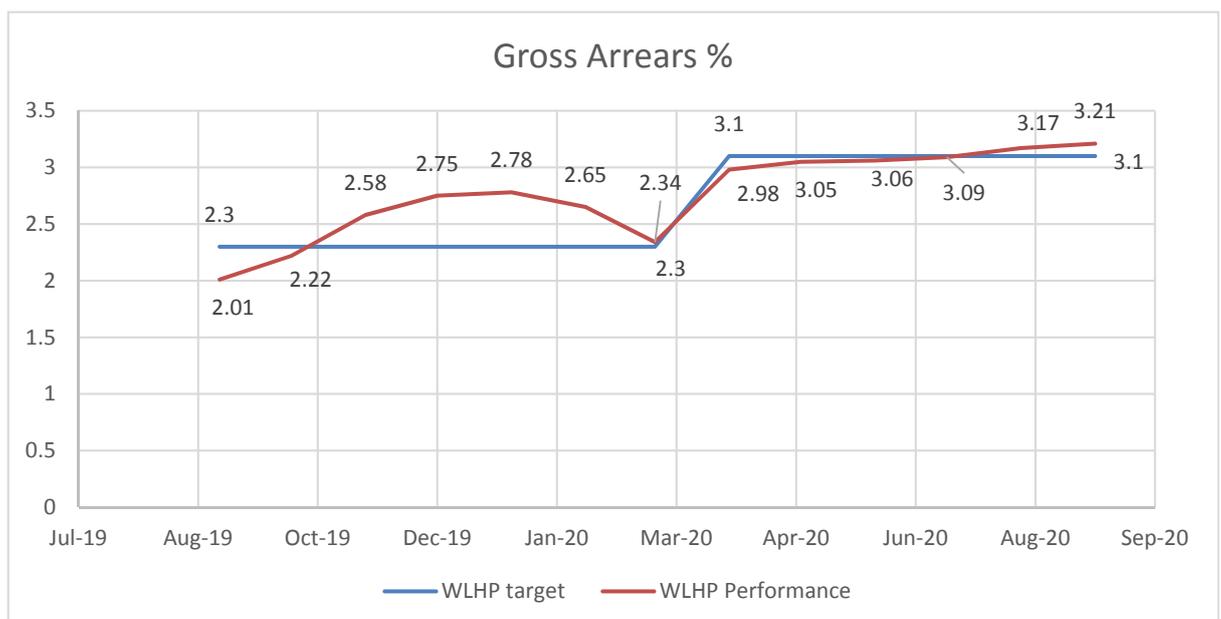
- 6.1 This section outlines performance as at the end of Quarter 2.
- 6.2 The following table presents our results for key measures. The majority of measures below and in appendix 1 are meeting target with the exception of Gross Rent Arrears, the number of gas safety checks met, % of payments made within 30 days and staff absence.
- 6.3

Indicator	Target	Current Performance (Q2)	
Gross Rent Arrears as at %of rent due	3.1%	3.21%	
Tenancy Sustainment	90%	95.35%	
Average Days to Let (ARC) – Excluding lockdown days	26 days	8 days	
Average Emergency Repairs Times (hours)	3	1.68	

7 Gross Rent Arrears

- 7.1 Gross Arrears, during the challenging circumstances of the last few months, is above target at 3.21%. Our revised target of 3.1% has taken into account both the current environment and the on boarding of former Barony customers.
- 7.2 We have seen an increase of Universal Credit claims during lockdown. We now have a caseload of 120 customers on Universal Credit (an increase of 56 cases (88%) since the end of the financial year 2019/20). UC Customers continue to have a 5 week wait to receive their benefit, which impacts their ability to pay their rent. Many of these people have required individual support from our housing officers and welfare benefit advisors. It is also worth noting that we are operating within target for the % of customers in arrears, set at 25%.

- 7.3 At the end of September, DWP introduced payment alignment for Universal Credit customers, meaning we now receive payment for customers who are on a Management Payment to Landlord the same day they are paid, rather than the bulk payment normally received 4-weekly. We aligned to this new payment arrangement on 12 October 2020 so we have yet to gauge in full how this change will impact arrears. This new payment alignment will allow us to monitor Universal Credit arrears more closely, specifically with individual customer accounts. The DWP portal now provides information of dates in which payments are due, allowing housing officers to take early action with any discrepancies.
- 7.4 Along with assessing the impact of daily payments from UC, Housing Officers are carrying out case reviews for every customer to maximise income for those who have experienced a change of circumstances. This has resulted in a number of successful claims for Discretionary Housing Payment which has improved the customers' arrears position. We are also enlisting the expertise of Wheatley Solutions across Group in re-profiling arrears since the transfer of stock from Barony.
- 7.5 The key challenges of the uncertain economic environment and the associated rates of unemployment requires early intervention and strong engagement with customers needing assistance with welfare benefits and links to employment pathways. Our reliance on the wraparound services available to our customers will be ever more significant. Housing officers continue to ensure our customers are aware of the supports available and this messaging will feature heavily throughout our annual rent campaign.
- 7.6 The chart below illustrates our Gross Rent Arrears over the past 12 months. The chart demonstrates that, although we saw increases in early lockdown, our performance since has been closer to target. There have been increases linked to our cyclical payments and our aim is to bring our Gross Rent Arrears in on target at 3.1% when our cyclical payments arrangements align to our year end.



8 Average Days to Let

- 8.1 Our key focus over the last few months has been to reduce the backlog of voids that resulted from the lockdown. Phase 2 of letting remobilisation commenced on the 17th August 2020. We are measuring our average days to let against 2 targets,
- Average days to let – Including lockdown days and;
 - Average days to let – excluding lockdown days.
- 8.2 Our ARC indicator of average days (including lockdown days) of 65.9 days to let shows the real impact the Coronavirus pandemic and lockdown has had on our letting. With letting of properties suspended from 20th March through to 17th August 2020, other than the provision of additional temporary accommodation units to Local Authorities, honouring pre allocations to resolve homelessness and the acquisition of new build - this level of performance is in line with expectations and it is anticipated that it will reflect the national picture when these statistics become available.
- 8.3 At the end of Q2 we have let 23 homes; 8 new build, 6 to West Lothian Council for use as temporary accommodation and 9 homes to customers with the highest need. Our average days to let (excluding lockdown days) is 8 days against a 26 day target.
- 8.4 We continue in our commitment to addressing homelessness. At the end of Q2, in addition to the 6 properties provided to West Lothian Council for temporary accommodation a further 7 tenancies were allocated to homeless nominations provided to us from the Council.

9 Tenancy Sustainment

- 9.1 The percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year at the end of Quarter 2 continues to exceed our 90% target at 96.43%. Having only once fallen below target since 2018 this indicator demonstrates the high level of support our Housing Officers and wraparound services offer.

10 Anti-Social Behaviour

- 10.1 There have been 80 anti-social behaviour cases recorded on our Streetwise case management system year to date for us. In the same period last year there were 23 – a 248% increase. Whilst we have seen an increase in the levels of anti-social behaviour reported to us since lockdown started, around 80% of these complaints relate to low level noise and disturbance that could be directly related to the lockdown circumstances. It is also worth noting that this year's figures include reported ASB from former Barony properties.

- 10.2 Our staff have provided advice, guidance and support throughout lockdown and although it has not been possible to fully resolve these cases due to lockdown restrictions, they have now all been revisited by Housing Officer and our Antisocial Behaviour Intervention and Prevention officers and the appropriate investigations have been undertaken. Our reduced pool of visiting officers are also carrying out anti-social behaviour visits where required however the need for this has been minimal.

11 Repairs

- 11.1 We have carried out both emergency and non-emergency repairs within target times. At the end of Quarter 2. Our average time taken to complete emergency repairs has been 1.68 hours against a 3-hour target. Our non-emergency repairs have been completed in 3.54 days against a 5.5 day target. Our Right First Time target is also being met at 97.7% the end of Quarter 2.
- 11.2 Our % of tenants satisfied with our repairs and maintenance service carried out in the last 12 months is on target at the end of Quarter 2 at 88.89% against an 87% target.
- 11.2 We are gearing up towards full remobilisation of the repairs service during November/December, albeit with some exclusions when it's not safe to carry out repair works. For example, when multiple trades are in the customer's home with the customer for a prolonged period of time. An inevitable consequence of being unable to provide a full service safely in the first half of the year, is that there is backlog of works such as roofing, drainage and customer requests. These will be project managed in a co-ordinated way, similar to the approach used in addressing the void backlog, whilst we move towards a full business as usual service.

12 Gas Safety

- 12.1 Our customer's safety has been our primary driver during lockdown. As a landlord responsibility, we prioritised to reduce the backlog of expired gas servicing certificates that arose during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic. During first few weeks of lockdown there was considerable concern amongst customers about letting trades persons into their homes to carry out works. Targeted and focused efforts from our Housing Officers and colleagues in the Customer Service Centre and Dunedin Canmore Property Services (DCPS), reduced the number of expired gas safety certificates that arose during lockdown restrictions (in total 8). This meant reassuring our customers that every effort would be made to ensure their safety whilst carrying out works, pooling resources and improving the process around gas safety. As of early August 2020, we have been in a 100% compliant position with no expired gas certificates across our properties.

- 12.2 The Charter indicator shows the number of certificates that have expired at any point during the last 12 months and for this reason we will report higher than usual figures, due to safety precautions we took for our staff and sensitivity to the concerns of our customers accessing their properties during the lockdown. Group have been in discussions with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) about this indicator, but at this time they will not accept amendments so that they can assess and report on the full impact of the COVID-19 lockdown.

13 % of payments made

- 13.1 We are reporting, 93.07% of invoices have been paid within timescale this year against a target of 96%. The decrease in performance is related to sickness absence reported below and measures were taken to reduce the impact on performance as far as was possible. All invoices paid late continue to be highlighted through a weekly report to the Head of Housing.

14 Sickness Absence

- 14.1 Our absence level is unusually high at 6.91% YTD. Due to the small number of staff our periods of absence can show as disproportionate.

15 Strategic projects – progress at Quarter 2

- 15.1 Appendix 2 outlines progress on the strategic projects in the Delivery Plan at the end of Quarter 2.
- Work with Police Scotland to develop a Group-wide Antisocial Behaviour and Crime Prevention and Mitigation Framework -The development of the Group Antisocial Behaviour and Crime Prevention and Mitigation Framework is progressing well. The draft will be circulated to key stakeholders for comment and feedback.
 - Create a new digitally enabled engagement framework - A new customer engagement framework is being developed to help support the ambitions in our new 2021-26 strategy – Your Home, Your Community, Your Future. This framework will contain both digital and off-line elements. The new framework will be presented to the Board at its next meeting in February.
 - Develop Group Homelessness Framework, including rapid rehousing -This framework is currently being drafted and will now be taken to the February Board. This is to allow us to incorporate the outcomes from local authority reviews of their Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans. In addition, it will take into account the action plan for the recommendations from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG)

- 15.2 All projects are on track to deliver on time with the exception of the Group Homelessness Framework for the reasons set out above.
- 15.3 The 2020/21 phased charter targets are included under Appendix 3, which take account of the fact that we need to establish a baseline in 2020/21 for new indicators in order to measure progress.

16 Key issues and conclusions

- 16.1 This report outlines positive progress in achieving the all but one of performance targets and the delivery of projects, despite the continuing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions that continue to affect business delivery. Key areas of focus during the remainder of the year will be the support to our customers who may be experiencing additional financial hardship and to manage our arrears, continued focus on letting properties and supporting our contribution to reducing homelessness, and delivery of safe and high quality repairs to customers.

17 Value for money implications

- 17.1 The measures and projects included in this report were agreed as the delivery plan for 2020/21. These items are intended to focus service improvement on the key priorities within the Strategy to make sure that financial and other resources are aligned with our priorities.

18 Impact on financial projections

- 18.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial requirements related to actions and projects within the report are subject to separate reporting and agreement.

19 Legal, regulatory, and charitable implications

- 19.1 Registered Social Landlords are required to provide an Annual Return on the Charter to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The key indicators within this return are included in monthly performance reporting. The Board approves the final return and this information is included in the year end performance report to the Wheatley Group Board. We are also required to involve tenants in the scrutiny of performance (this is done through our Tenant Scrutiny Panel) and to report to tenants annually each year.

20 Partnership implications

- 20.1 Reports on the Delivery Plan can be used to identify areas where partnerships need to be strengthened or amended to help us achieve our strategic vision.

21 Implementation and deployment

- 21.1 This report provides updates on progress with the Delivery Plan. Any specific projects and actions are subject to separate approval.

22 Equalities impact

22.1 There is no direct equalities impact from this report.

23 Recommendations

23.1 The Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Measures dashboard

Appendix 2: Strategic projects dashboard

Appendix 3: Phased Targets for 2020/21

Appendix 1 - WLHP Board - Delivery Plan 20/21 - Strategic Measures

Measure	2019/20	YTD 2020/21		
	2019	2020		Status
	Value	Value	Target	
Average time for full response to all complaints (working days) - overall	5	3.1	8	
Average time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours) – make safe	1.9	1.68	3	
Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (working days)	4.92	3.54	5.5	
% reactive repairs completed right first time	96.42%	97.7%	95%	
Number of gas safety checks not met	0	8	0	
% of tenants who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in last 12 months satisfied with the R&M service	94.23%	88.89%	87%	
% tenancy offers refused during the year	12.6%	0%		
% new tenancies sustained for more than a year - overall	98.39%	96.43%	90%	
% lettable houses that became vacant	5.59%	5.53%	7.33%	
Average days to re-let properties (ARC) – excluding lockdown days		8.0	26	
Average days to re-let properties (ARC)	1.54	65.9		
Average time to complete approved applications for medical adaptations (calendar days)	14.33	8.5	72	
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as a % of rent due	2.34%	3.21%	3.1%	
% avoidable contact	10.97%	9.47%	18%	
% of payments made within the reporting period which were paid in 30 days or fewer (from the date the business receives a valid invoice)	97.3%	93.07%	96%	

Measure	2019/20	YTD 2020/21		
	2019	2020		Status
	Value	Value	Target	
Total number of jobs, training places or apprenticeships created including Wheatley Pledge	4	0	0	
New build completions - Social Housing	83	8	8	
% Sickness rate	0.27%	6.91%	3%	

Appendix 2 - WLHP Board - Delivery Plan 20/21 - Strategic Projects

Strategic Project	Delivery Date	Status	% Progress
Develop Group Homelessness Framework, including rapid rehousing	31-Dec-2020		<input type="text" value="0%"/>
Work with Police Scotland to develop a Group-wide Antisocial Behaviour and Crime Prevention and Mitigation Framework	28-Feb-2021		<input type="text" value="0%"/>
Create a new digitally enabled engagement framework	31-Mar-2021		<input type="text" value="0%"/>

Appendix 3

Phased Targets for 2020/21

	WLHP Charter Indicators	18/19 Result	19/20 Target	20/21 Target
1	Percentage annual tenants satisfied with the overall service	98%	91%	Not Applicable
2	Percentage annual tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions	100%	93%	Not Applicable
3	Percentage complaints responded to in full at Stage 1 and the % complaints responded to in full at Stage 2 - Overall	New	Baseline Year	96%
4	Average time in working days for a full response at Stage 1 and the average time in working days for a full response at Stage 2 - Overall	New	Baseline Year	8
5	Percentage annual tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making processes	100%	90%	Not Applicable
6	Percentage stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS).	100%	100%	100%
7	Percentage annual existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	93%	90%	Not Applicable
8	Average time to complete emergency repairs (hours)	2.47	3	3
9	Average time to complete non-emergency repairs (working days)	4.86	5.5	5.5 days
10	Percentage reactive repairs completed right first time	95.49%	95%	95%
11	Number of times in the reporting year that you did not meet your statutory obligation to complete a gas safety check within 12 months of a gas appliance being fitted or its last check.	0	0	0
12	Percentage tenants satisfied with repairs or maintenance carried out in last 12 months	98%	93%	87% to end of December. 93% to end of March. Annual target is 90%
13	Percentage annual tenants satisfied with the landlord's contribution to the management of the neighbourhood they live in.	New	Baseline Year	Not Applicable

	WLHP Charter Indicators	18/19 Result	19/20 Target	20/21 Target
14	Percentage of tenancy offers refused during the year	23%	21%	Contextual
15	Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases reported in the last year which were resolved.	New	Baseline Year	98%
16	Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year - overall	94.73%	93%	90%
17	Percentage of lettable houses that became vacant	2.06%	7.33%	7.33%
18	Percentage of rent due lost through properties being empty	0.02%	0.44%	0.44%
19	Number of households currently waiting for adaptations to their home.	New	Contextual	Contextual
20	Total cost of adaptations completed in the year by source of funding (£).	New	Contextual	Contextual
21	Average time to complete approved applications for medical adaptations (calendar days) *	10.62	25	72 *
22	Percentage of court actions initiated which resulted in eviction - overall	50%	25%	33%
23	Percentage of referrals under Section 5, and other referrals for homeless households made by the local authority, that resulted in an offer	New	Baseline Year	Contextual
24	Percentage of offers made to LA Section 5 and other referrals for homeless households that result in a let. (ARC indicator only for Local Authorities)	New	Baseline Year	Contextual
25	Percentage of annual tenants who feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money	84%	83%	Not Applicable
26	Rent collected as % of total rent due	99.78%	99.70%	99.70%
27	Percentage gross rent arrears	1.7%	2.3%	3.10%
28	Average annual management fee per factored property.	N/A	N/A	Not Applicable
29	Percentage of annual owners satisfied with the factoring service	N/A	N/A	Not Applicable
30	Average length of time taken to re-let properties (calendar days) *	2.14	6.5	26

Report

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Morgan Kingston, Finance Manager

Approved by: Pauline Turnock, Director of Financial Reporting

Subject: Finance Report for the Period to 30 September 2020

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an overview of the finance report for the period to 30 September 2020.

2. Authorising context

2.1 Under the terms of the Intra-Group Agreement between WLHP and the Wheatley Group, as well as the Group Authorise, Manage, Monitor Matrix, the WLHP Board is responsible for the on-going monitoring of performance against agreed targets. This includes the on-going performance of its finances.

2.2 This report provides the Board with an update of performance to date to allow it to discharge its role in monitoring performance and agreeing any actions required.

3. Risk appetite and assessment

3.1 Our agreed risk appetite for performance against Group is “Open”. This level of risk tolerance is defined as “Prepared to invest for reward and minimise the possibility of financial loss by managing the risks to a tolerable level”.

4. Background

4.1 This report outlines performance against budget approved by the Board on 27 May 2020.

4.2 The appendix provides more detail on the financial results.

5. Discussion

Finance Report for Period to 30 September 2020

5.1 We have reported a statutory surplus of £297k to the end of period 6. This is £857k favourable to budget. A number of the variances to budget relate to the delay in the transfer of the Barony properties and the associated income and expenditure.

- Total income of £2,198k is £447k favourable to budget. Within this, gross rental income is £143k adverse to budget, this relates to the units transferred from Barony HA. The budget assumed the units would transfer on 1 April but this transfer actually took place on 17 May.
- Operating costs of £1,397k have been incurred to date, reporting a £288k favourable variance. All lines are reporting lower spend or on track with budget.
- Revenue repairs and maintenance expenditure is £129k favourable to budget. Of this variance £32k relates to the Barony properties with the remaining variance due to the revised operating model which has resulted in lower than expected costs Direct employee costs are £32k favourable to budget, this includes the claim made under HMRC's job retention scheme for the period to date.
- Interest costs reflects lower than expected loan drawdowns as a result of lower than expected new build activity and reports a £122k favourable variance in the year to date.

5.2 Net capital expenditure of £296k has been incurred in the year to date, £5,549k lower than budget.

- Core programme expenditure of £68k is £254k favourable to budget. Of this variance £42k relates to the Barony units and the remaining variance is linked to the postponement of the majority of investment works in the year to date. A re-profile programme is now underway.
- Grant income of £1,392k relating to Almondvale has been claimed in the year to date.
- New build expenditure of £1,601k has been incurred up the end of period 6 which is £6,803k below budget. Spend has started to increase in the last 2 periods but the year to date spend reflects the closure of sites between March and June and the subsequent remobilisation through the summer.

6. Q2 2020/21 Full Year Forecast

6.1 The Q2 Forecast output for 2020/21 reports a statutory surplus of £151k, £10,404k lower than budget and an operating surplus of £886k, £10,586k lower than budget, driven by the timing of new build completions and the recognition of the grant.

- 6.2 Grant income is £10,716k lower than the original budget. This reflects the re-profiled new build programme, which shows the eight new build units completed at Dixon Terrace in July will be the only units completed in the year. These properties were originally planned to be completed in P12 of 2019/20. The original budget assumed a further 188 units at Almondvale and Jarvey Street would be completed in P12 of 2020/21 but the completion dates for both sites have now slipped into 2021/22.
- 6.3 Gross rental income is forecast to be £203k lower than the original budget. This reflects the year to date variance which is a result of the delay in the transfer of the Barony properties and the July completion of the units at Dixon Terrace. In addition, a further reduction of £60k is expected later in the year linked to the revised timing of the completion of the properties at Almondvale and Jarvey Street.
- 6.4 Total operating expenditure is projected to be £296k favourable to budget. Employee costs savings of £37k reflect the delay in the Barony units transferring as well as the forecast staff furlough claims. Forecast revenue repairs and maintenance savings of £142k reflect the revised operating model with the full service resuming in November.
- 6.5 Net capital expenditure is forecast to be £5,076k lower than budget. Core programme expenditure is expected to be £304k lower than the original budget. Of this variance £42k relates to the Barony units and the remaining variance is attributable to the postponement of a number of planned investment works as a result of the Coronavirus epidemic. New build grant income is expected to be £5,882k lower than budget linked to lower new build expenditure which is expected to be £10,655k lower than budget.

7. Key issues and conclusions

- 7.1 The report informs the Board of the financial performance against year to date budget. The statutory surplus of £297k is £857k favourable to budget.

8. Value for money implications

- 8.1 Ensuring financial performance remains in line with approved budget is a key element of continuing to demonstrate value for money. After excluding non-cash grant income, the forecast statutory deficit of £396k is £312k favourable to the original budget.

9. Impact on financial projections

- 9.1 The 2020/21 Business Plan was approved by the Board at the February 2020 meeting. The Quarter 2 forecast, as well as the updated financial projections presented to the board in July, highlight the expected variances from the approved financial projections.

10. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

- 10.1 Not applicable.

11. Partnership implications

11.1 Not applicable.

12. Implementation and deployment

12.1 Not applicable.

13. Equalities impact

13.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

14. Recommendations

14.1 The Board is requested to note the management accounts for the period to 30 September 2020 and the full year forecast out-turn to 31 March 2021 shown in more detail in Appendix 1.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Finance Report to 30 September 2020



Period to 30 September 2020 Finance Report

1) Period 6 YTD - Operating Statement

	Year to 30 September 2020			Full Year
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	Budget £ks
INCOME				
Rental Income	1,659	1,802	(143)	3,664
Void Losses	(9)	(56)	47	(112)
Net Rental Income	1,650	1,746	(96)	3,552
Other Income	1	6	(5)	22
HAG Recognised in the Year	547	0	547	11,263
TOTAL INCOME	2,198	1,752	447	14,836
EXPENDITURE				
Employee Costs - Direct	241	273	32	546
Employee Costs - Group Services	45	45	0	72
Direct Running Costs	126	191	65	367
Running Costs - Group Services	28	28	0	46
Revenue Repairs and Maintenance	143	273	129	582
Bad Debts	18	25	7	49
Depreciation	796	851	55	1,702
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,397	1,686	288	3,364
NET OPERATING SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	801	66	735	11,472
<i>Net Operating Margin</i>	36%	4%	33%	77%
Interest receivable	0	1	(1)	2
Interest payable	(504)	(627)	122	(919)
STATUTORY SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	297	(560)	857	10,554

Key highlights year to date:

- Net operating surplus of £801k is £735k favourable to budget. Statutory surplus for the period to 30 September is £297k, £857k favourable to budget.
- The main driver of the variance is HAG recognised in the year of £547k, this relates to the final 8 units at Dixon Terrace which were completed in July. These units were originally due to be completed in March 2020 but were delayed due to site closures as a result of the Coronavirus epidemic.
- The original budget presumed that the units transferring from Barony HA would do so on 1 April 2020. The transfer took place on 17 May 2020. A number of the variances in the year to date relate to the revised timing of the transfer from Barony HA
- Gross rental income of £1,659k is £143k adverse to budget. The majority of this variance relates to the delay in the transfer of the Barony properties. Void losses are £47k favourable to budget.
- Total expenditure of £1,397k is £288k favourable to budget. Of this variance £113k relates to the Barony units. The largest variance in expenditure relates to revenue repairs and maintenance expenditure which is £129k favourable to budget. Of this variance £32k relates to the Barony properties with the remaining variance due to the revised operating model which has resulted in lower than expected costs.
- Group services charges for staff and running costs of £73k represent West Lothian's share of Wheatley Solutions' staff and service costs.
- Gross interest payable of £504k represents interest due on the loans due to Wheatley Funding Ltd 1, with interest costs lower linked to the profile of spend in the capital investment and new build programmes
- Core investment expenditure of £68k is £254k lower than budget. Of this variance £42k relates to the Barony units and the remaining variance is attributable to the postponement of a number of planned investment works as a result of the Coronavirus epidemic.
- New Build expenditure of £1,601k is reported at the end of period with the variance of £6,803k driven by the closure of all construction sites in the first quarter. The main variances relate to Almondvale which is £3,941k under budget and Jarvey Street where spend is £1,629k below the original budget. Grant income of £1,392k has been received in the year to date.

	Year to 30 September 2020			Full Year
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	Budget £ks
INVESTMENT				
Total Capital Investment Income	1,392	2,894	(1,503)	8,659
Total Expenditure on Core Programme	68	322	254	645
New Build & Other Investment	1,601	8,404	6,803	18,138
Other Capital Expenditure	19	13	(5)	27
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	1,688	8,739	7,051	18,809
NET CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	296	5,845	5,549	10,150

2) Period 6 only - Operating Statement

	Period 6 - September 2020			Full Year
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	Budget £ks
INCOME				
Rental Income	301	300	1	3,664
Void Losses	(3)	(9)	6	(112)
Net Rental Income	298	291	7	3,552
Other Income	0	6	(6)	22
HAG Recognised in the Year	0	0	0	11,263
TOTAL INCOME	298	297	2	14,836
EXPENDITURE				
Employee Costs - Direct	41	46	4	546
Employee Costs - Group Services	7	7	0	72
Direct Running Costs	19	31	12	367
Running Costs - Group Services	4	4	0	46
Revenue Repairs and Maintenance	34	47	13	582
Bad Debts	3	4	1	49
Depreciation	142	142	0	1,702
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	252	282	30	3,364
NET OPERATING SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	47	15	32	11,472
<i>Net Operating Margin</i>	16%	5%	11%	77%
Interest receivable	0	0	(0)	2
Interest payable	(83)	(115)	32	(919)
STATUTORY SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	(36)	(99)	64	10,554

Key highlights year to date:

- The table shows the operating statement for period 6 only. Net operating surplus of £47k is £32k favourable to budget. Statutory deficit for the period is £36k, £64k favourable to budget.
- Net rental income is £7k favourable to budget driven by void losses which are £6k favourable to budget. Other income is £6k adverse to budget, this variance relates to grant income for medical adaptations which was budgeted to be received in P6 but this is now expected to be received later in the year.
- Total expenditure of £252k is £32k favourable to budget, driven by direct running costs and repairs and maintenance expenditure which are favourable to budget.
- Interest expenditure is £32k favourable to budget which reflects the opening loan balance which was lower than budget as well as the fact that no drawdowns have been made in the year to date.
- Core programme expenditure is £35k favourable to budget and new build expenditure is £858k below budget.

	Period 6 - September 2020			Full Year
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	Budget £ks
INVESTMENT				
Total Capital Investment Income	746	-	746	8,659
Total Expenditure on Core Programme	19	54	35	645
New Build & Other Investment	767	1,625	858	18,138
Other Capital Expenditure	19	13	(5)	27
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	805	1,692	887	18,809
NET CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	59	1,692	1,634	10,150

3) Management Information - Employee & Running Costs

Employee Costs	Year to 30 September 2020			Full Year Budget £ks
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	
Salary/NIC/Pension	309	351	43	734
Staff Costs Capitalised	(70)	(78)	(8)	(188)
Overtime	2	0	(2)	0
TOTAL	241	273	32	546

Comments

Employee Costs

- Employee costs of £241k are £32k favourable to budget. Salary and on-costs are £43k lower than budget linked to the delay in the transfer of the Barony properties as well as new build staff costs which are lower than budget with a claim made under the job retention scheme. Capitalised staff costs of £70k are £8k lower than budget which reflects the impact of the lower costs of the new build team on the capitalisation adjustment.

Direct Running Costs	Year to 30 September 2020			Full Year Budget £ks
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	
Consultancy/Legal/Insurance	1	16	14	32
Environmental Recharges	11	11	0	27
Initiatives	21	28	7	39
Office & Property	92	132	40	262
Staff Related Costs	1	4	3	8
TOTAL	126	191	65	367

Running Costs

- Direct running costs of £126K are £65k favourable to budget.
- Central environmental recharges include the use of the Bathgate depot, owned by Dunedin Canmore and vehicle and equipment use, where the costs for these are incurred centrally.
- Office and property costs are lower than budget as a result of savings made in overheads with all office based staff working from home.

Initiatives	Year to 30 September 2020			Full Year Budget £ks
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	
Helping Hand	-	1	1	2
Tenancy Support Service	4	4	0	8
Think Yes	-	3	3	5
Wheatley Foundation	17	17	0	17
Wider Action	-	3	3	6
TOTAL	21	28	7	39

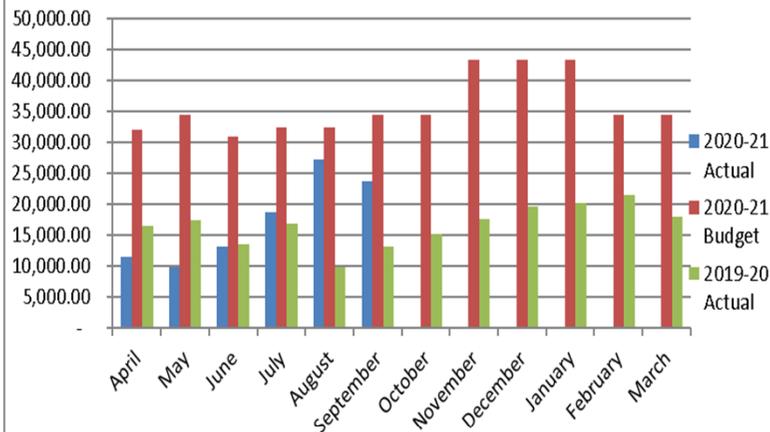
Initiatives

- The bottom table provides a breakdown of year to date Initiative expenditure. The annual donation to the Wheatley Foundation was paid in period 1.

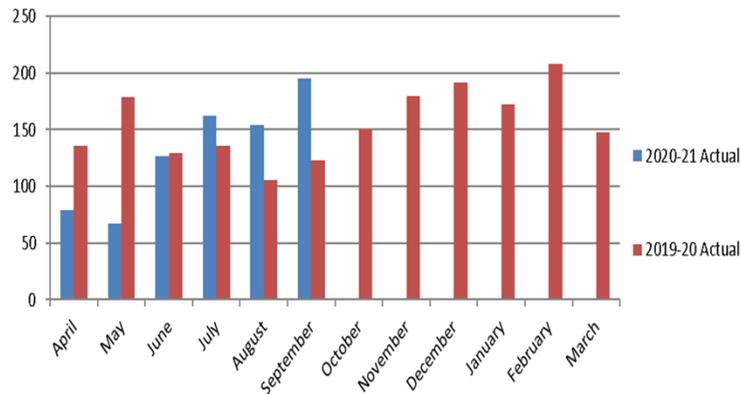
4) Management Information - Repairs and Investment

Repairs & Maintenance	Year to 30 September 2020			Full Year Budget £ks
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	
Responsive Repairs	104	197	92	431
Cyclical Maintenance	37	73	35	146
Communal Heating	1	3	2	5
TOTAL	143	273	129	582

Responsive Repair spend per Month (£)



No. of Responsive Repair Jobs



Comments

Repairs

- Repairs and maintenance expenditure of £143 is £129k favourable to budget.
- Responsive repairs costs are £92k favourable to budget. Cyclical maintenance costs are £35k favourable to budget. Of the overall variance of £130k, £32k relates to the delay in the transfer of the Barony properties with the remaining variance reflecting the revised operating model.
- The graphs present the 2020/21 spend and volume of responsive repair jobs against budget and prior year trends. The higher volume of jobs from June reflects the transfer of the Barony properties. The 2020/21 budget is higher than the previous year to reflect the repair costs associated with the units transferred from Barony.

Investment

- Core investment spend of £21K is £247k lower than budget. This is as a result of the majority of works in the investment programme being postponed and the delay in the transfer of the Barony properties. Void costs of £14k are £5k favourable to budget.

Investment	Year to 30 September 2020			Full Year Budget £ks
	Actual £ks	Budget £ks	Variance £ks	
Void	14	19	5	37
Core Investment	21	268	247	537
Capitalised Staff	33	35	2	71
TOTAL	68	322	254	645

5) Management Information - New Build

	Year to 30 September 2020			Full Year Budget £'000
	Actual £'000	Budget £'000	Variance £'000	
SR - Almondvale	1,395	5,336	3,941	6,841
SR - Dixon Terrace	41	-	(41)	160
SR - Harthill	-	1,108	1,108	3,209
SR - Blackness Road		26	26	223
SR - Winchburgh	57	-	(57)	1,614
SR - Raw Holdings		133	133	1,691
SR - Kirk Lane	-	41	41	41
SR - Jarvey Street	73	1,702	1,629	2,760
MMR - Almondvale	-	-	0	1,482
Deans South	-	-	0	-
Capitalised Employee Costs	37	59	22	117
TOTAL INVESTMENT	1,601	8,404	6,803	18,137
GRANT INCOME	1,392	3,727	2,335	8,659
NET CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	209	4,677	4,468	9,478

New Build Expenditure

- £1,601k of new build expenditure has been incurred in the year to date which is £6,803k lower than budget. This is a result of the Scottish Government instruction to close all construction sites on 23 March. Sites have now re-opened and it is spend is starting to increase.
- The final 8 units at Dixon Terrace were completed in July. This allowed us to recognise grant income of £547k which was being held in deferred income. These units were originally due to complete in March 2020 but were delayed due to site closures as a result of Coronavirus.
- The proposed development at Harthill by developer Springfield was not supported by the Local authority and as a result will not progress. The new build team have identified potential replacements for this development and are looking to progress these.

Grant Income

- Grant income of £1,392k relating to Almondvale has been received in the year to date. Grant receipts are £2,335k lower than budget linked to the lower levels of new build spend.

6) Balance Sheet

	30 September 2020 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Fixed Assets		
Social Housing Properties	49,944	37,519
Other Fixed Assets	277	258
	<u>50,221</u>	<u>37,777</u>
Pension asset	3	3
Current Assets		
Trade & Other Debtors	217	167
Cash & Cash Equivalents	1,228	683
	<u>1,445</u>	<u>850</u>
Creditors: within 1 year		
Trade Creditors	(2)	(9)
Accruals & Deferred Income	(11,803)	(11,157)
Prepayments of Rent and Service Charge	(108)	(61)
Other Creditors	(55)	(82)
Amounts due to Group Undertakings	(1,267)	(733)
	<u>(13,236)</u>	<u>(12,042)</u>
Net Current Liability	<u>(11,791)</u>	<u>(11,189)</u>
Long Term Creditors		
Amounts due to Group Undertakings	(19,834)	(18,725)
	<u>(19,834)</u>	<u>(18,725)</u>
Net Assets	<u><u>18,599</u></u>	<u><u>7,863</u></u>
Capital and Reserves		
Share Capital	-	-
Revenue Reserve	18,599	7,863
	<u>18,599</u>	<u>7,863</u>
Partnership's funds	<u><u>18,599</u></u>	<u><u>7,863</u></u>

Comments:

- The balance sheet as at 31 March 2020 reflect the audited statutory accounts for 2019/20. No change in the pension asset is assumed during the year for management accounts purposes as the valuation is carried out annually. The actuarial valuation for the 2019/20 year end reported a £3k pension asset.
- The balance sheet as at 30 September also reflects the assets and liabilities transferred from Barony Housing Association. Housing assets of £11,552k were transferred along with liabilities of £1,113k of which £1,109k is the WLHP share of the outstanding Barony loan balance. The overall impact of the transfer was an increase in reserves of £10,439k.
- The value of our fixed assets reflects additions (including the Barony additions) in the year less depreciation.
- **Trade & other debtors** of £217k include an intercompany balance of £125k.
- **Cash at Bank** – At 30 September WLHP had £1,228k in the bank and has access to draw down further funding from WFL1 as and when required.
- **Short-Term Creditors** – Amounts due within one year of £13,236k include £1,267k due to other Wheatley entities and £11,803k in accruals and deferred income, primarily HAG received for the construction of new build properties. The remaining balance includes rent received in advance from our tenants, trade and other creditors.
- **Long-Term Creditors** - This relates to £19.8m of loans due to WFL1 less fees paid. This balance includes the £1,109k loan transferred from Barony. This borrowing has primarily been used to fund the new build investment programme.

7) Quarter 2 Forecast to 31 March 2021

	2020/21 Budget £ks	Q2 Forecast £ks	Variance £ks
INCOME			
Rental Income	3,664	3,461	(203)
Void Losses	(112)	(65)	47
Net Rental Income	3,552	3,396	(156)
Other Income	22	12	(10)
HAG Recognised in the Year	11,263	547	(10,716)
TOTAL INCOME	14,836	3,955	(10,882)
EXPENDITURE			
Employee Costs - Direct	546	509	37
Employee Costs - Group Services	72	72	0
Direct Running Costs	367	287	80
Running Costs - Group Services	46	46	0
Revenue Repairs and Maintenance	582	440	142
Bad Debts	49	67	(18)
Depreciation	1,702	1,647	55
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	3,364	3,068	296
NET OPERATING SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	11,472	886	(10,586)
<i>Net Operating Margin</i>	77%	22%	55%
Interest receivable	2	2	-
Interest payable	(919)	(737)	182
STATUTORY SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	10,554	151	(10,404)
INVESTMENT			
Total Capital Investment Income	8,659	2,777	(5,882)
Total Expenditure on Core Programme	645	341	304
New Build & Other Investment	18,138	7,483	10,655
Other Capital Expenditure	27	27	-
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	18,809	7,850	10,959
NET CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	10,150	5,073	5,076

Comments

- This table shows the 2020/21 budget presented to the Board compared to the Q2 forecast for 2020/21. The forecast reflects the results in the year to date as well as the expenditure for the remaining 6 periods of 2020/21
- The forecast operating surplus of £886k is £10,586k lower than budget. Statutory surplus forecast of £151k is £10,404k adverse to budget.
- The main driver of this variance is the lower level of HAG income recognised on the completion of new build properties which is £10,716k lower than the original budget. The forecast reflects the HAG income recognised for the completion of the final 8 units at Dixon Terrace which were originally expected to be completed in P12 of 2019/20. These are the only units currently expected to be completed during 2020/21. The original budget assumed 188 units at Almondvale and Jarvey Street would be completed but these units are now expected to be completed in 2021/22.
- The variance in gross rental income of £203k reflects the year to date variance which is largely as a result of the units from Barony HA transferring in May 2020. The original budget assumed the transfer would occur on 1 April. In addition rental income includes a reduction of £60k for rental income for properties originally expected to be completed in P12 as these are now expected to be completed in 2021/22.
- Total operating expenditure is projected to be £296k favourable to budget. Employee costs savings reflect the delay in the Barony units transferring as well as expected income from staff on furlough. Revenue repairs and maintenance savings reflect the revised operating model and the return to the full service in November 2020.
- New build expenditure and grant income as well as core investment programme expenditure have been updated to reflect the revised spend profile.

Report

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Anthony Allison, Director of Governance

Approved by: Steven Henderson, Group Director of Finance

Subject: Governance update

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Board on the following governance related matters:
- Annual Assurance Statement; and
 - Updated Group IRR rates

2. Authorising context

- 2.1 The Group Board is responsible for agreeing the overall governance Framework for the Group. This is reflected in the requirement for the Annual Assurance Statement (“the Statement”) to be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator (“SHR”) at Group level. As such, the statement is reserved to the Group Board for approval.
- 2.2 The Board is responsible for agreeing the criteria for development activity which set the parameters for the Group Development Committee. The criteria include return hurdle rates which are set at Group level.

3. Risk Appetite and assessment

- 3.1 Our agreed risk appetite for governance is “cautious”. This level of risk tolerance is defined as a “preference for safe delivery options that have a low degree of inherent risk and have only limited potential for reward”.
- 3.2 We mitigate this risk through having clearly defined roles and responsibilities across our governance framework and regularly updating the Board on governance related matters.

4. Background

- 4.1 We are required to produce a Statement annually, taking into account the associated requirements of the Framework and statutory guidance. For this year’s Statement, the Framework includes some temporary changes for 2020/21 only.

5. Discussion

Annual Assurance Statement

- 5.1 As part of the revision to the SHR's Framework, the requirements relating to the Statement were amended. The submission deadline was extended from the end of October to the end of November. Additionally, the SHR recognised that:

“Given the circumstances, it may be that the level of external, independent assurance could be less than the previous year. However, in most cases it would be appropriate for governing bodies and committees to place reliance on some or all of the independent, external assurance received for the previous year’s assurance statement.”

- 5.2 As with the previous year's Statement, it covers all RSLs in the Group and it is for the Group Board to determine whether, under the circumstances, any non-compliance is sufficient to be considered 'material'. In assessing materiality, we have based this on the SHR's Statutory Guidance which states we should consider whether the issue could:

- *seriously affect the interests and safety of tenants, people who are homeless or other service users;*
- *threaten the stability, efficient running or viability of service delivery arrangements;*
- *bring the landlord into disrepute, or raise public or stakeholder concern about your organisation or the social housing sector; and*
- *in the case of RSLs, put at risk the good governance and financial health of the organisation.*

- 5.3 Taking into account the current SHR Framework and Guidance the Group Board agreed the following Statement:

The Group Board considered evidence at its meeting on 28 October 2020 and confirmed we have appropriate assurance that all Registered Social Landlords which are part of Wheatley Housing Group Limited (being Wheatley Housing Group, GHA, Dunedin Canmore Housing, Cube Housing Association, Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership, Loretto Housing Association and West Lothian Housing Partnership) materially comply with:

- *all relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework;*
- *all relevant standards in the Scottish Social Housing Charter; and*
- *taking into account the current guidance and restrictions relating to the Covid 19 pandemic, all relevant legislative duties*

The Covid 19 pandemic has impacted the planned achievement of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for all Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership stock. Full compliance is expected to be achieved early in 2021/22.

The spreadsheets attached at Appendices 1-3 document:

- a breakdown of the compliance requirements associated with 3 areas identified in the statement;
- a summary of our self-assessment findings;
- the key sources of assurance and evidence; and
- a declaration of our compliance status.

The appendices relate to the following areas:

- Appendix 1 Self-assessment against Chapter 3 Section 1;
- Appendix 2 Self-assessment against Chapter 3 Section 2 – Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management; and
- Appendix 3 Self-assessment against Chapter 3 Section 3 – Constitutional requirements.

- 5.4 Our declaration and sources of assurance are the same as the previous year for the vast majority of the requirements. This reflects the fact that the obligations are recurring and we have correspondingly set up recurring means to achieve compliance. Within this context and in keeping with the SHR guidance we have therefore placed some reliance on external or independent assurance undertaken in previous years. This is in addition to in year assurance in areas such as Cyber Security, the annual KPMG external audit, Chatham Financial advice on our Treasury Management Policy review and external legal advice on a range of areas such as our constitutional changes, funding activity and external reviews on our demand analysis assumptions by both Retties (for MMR/PRS) and Indigo House (for Dumfries and Galloway).
- 5.5 As these were subject to detailed Group Audit Committee and Board review last year, the additional detail on the statement above focuses on changes or new issues which have emerged in year and the non-Framework related compliance requirements.

Covid-19

Service model

- 5.6 The pandemic has had implications for our service model as we have had to adjust our operating model to comply with the associated restrictions. As a result of this, we had to adjust service levels, particularly in areas such as repairs and environmental services.
- 5.7 As part of this process, the Board has discussed the Operating Model and approach to remobilisation. We have considered the implications our revised service models have had in relation to compliance with the Social Housing Charter (“the Charter”) and ‘all relevant legislation’.
- 5.8 On the basis that we have sought to balance delivering as full a service model as possible with complying with the restrictions in place and appropriately protecting both our tenants and staff we have not assessed this resulting any level of ‘material’ non-compliance.

- 5.9 We have maintained an emergency repairs service and throughout the pandemic we have where possible strengthened our compliance at the earliest opportunity such as transitioning gas safety check to forced entry, other than those who are shielding, where appropriate to do so.

Governance

- 5.10 Changes were agreed to constitutions across the Group as part of our response to the pandemic. As part of this we had to balance achieving the overarching Regulatory Standard (6) of having appropriately skilled and knowledgeable governing bodies with specific elements of the Framework regarding tenure.
- 5.11 As part of this, the Group Board agreed that, in recognition of the exceptional circumstances, we extend the Board Chair tenure beyond the SHR's 5-year tenure limit for Chairs. As part of this, the Group Board agreed this represented a 'non material' breach on the basis that it does not represent a permanent change, rather a one-off, time bound extension in recognition of the circumstances.
- 5.12 As part of this process we considered the implications for compliance with the Framework. All changes were agreed by the members attending the subsequent Special General Meeting.

Social Housing Charter

- 5.13 The Charter, distinct from the Framework, contains a total of 16 outcomes and standards that social landlords should aim to achieve. As two of the standards only apply to Local Authorities, 14 apply to us. A copy of the standards is attached at Appendix 4. The Statutory Guidance in relation to the Statement requires us to also include a statement of compliance with the Charter.
- 5.14 The SHR sets a wide range of specific performance measures RSLs must collect as part of compliance with the standards in the charter. The measures form what we report to the SHR each year as part of the Annual Return on the Charter.
- 5.15 The Charter measures are augmented by the SHR prescribing a wide range of specific questions that RSLs must ask as part of their tenant satisfaction surveys relating to the Charter standards. It is not a requirement to conduct this survey annually therefore our approach for this year does not impact our compliance.
- 5.16 We therefore have in place a very robust approach to assurance and evidence of how we are performing relative to the charter. The key issues in relation to the Charter relate to the implications of DGHP's progress against SHQS and the changes to our Operating Model which are covered previously in the report.

All relevant legislative duties.

- 5.17 This requirement of the statement is, by its nature, very wide ranging. Our approach to compliance in this area is a combination of the legal framework for our activities and our internal policies, which give substance to the respective laws and regulations. Policies are reviewed by expert internal staff and, where appropriate, by external advisors. We also routinely engage external expertise in complex, non-core areas such as fundraising and FCA related activity.
- 5.18 In order to monitor compliance we operate a 4 Lines of Defence Model that provides assurance to senior management and Board members about the operation of internal controls in place to confirm the Group's meeting legal obligations.
- 5.19 Beyond our core 4 Lines of Defence Model, we are subject to external scrutiny for example through the annual external audit process in specific areas of legislation and spot inspections, such as HMRC.
- 5.20 We have not had any instances where a judgement has gone against the Group that we are materially not meeting legislative duties.
- 5.21 The pandemic has impacted our legislative duties, such as through new acts introduced and derogations granted to existing legislation. These changes have been monitored on an ongoing basis and have been supported by updates to the Board on the substance of the changes and how we will comply with them.

Group IRR rate

- 5.22 As part of the criteria we set for development projects we apply the Group wide Internal Rate of Return ("IRR"). The Group Development Committee's authority to approve projects is based on a number of criteria agreed by the Board, of which this is on.
- 5.23 [redacted]

6. Key issues and conclusions

- 6.1 The updates and proposals in the report allow us to maintain a strong focus on having clear and robust governance arrangements.

7. Value for money implications

- 7.1 There are no value for money implications arising from this report.

8. Impact on financial projections

- 8.1 There is no financial impact associated with this report.

9. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

9.1 The legal and regulatory implications are set out in the body of the report.

10. Partnership implications

10.1 There are no partnership implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

11. Implementation and deployment

11.1 The proposals within the report will be effected immediately.

12. Equalities impact

12.1 As part of our Board recruitment process we actively seek to engage with as diverse a range of prospective candidates as possible. We are also in the process of refining our Board recruitment approach across the Group as part of the implementation of our Group Equality and Diversity policy.

13. Recommendations

13.1 The Board is asked to:

- 1) Note the Group Annual Assurance Statement;
- 2) Note the development project approval criteria will be updated to reflect the new Group IRR rate

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Self-assessment against Chapter 3 Section 1

Appendix 2 - Self-assessment against Chapter 3 Section 2 – Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management

Appendix 3 - Self-assessment against Chapter 3 Section 3 – Constitutional requirements

Appendix 4 – Social Housing Charter [redacted but available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017/>]

Requirements for RSLs	Self-Assessment Commentary	Evidence and sources of assurance	Self Assessment
Assurance & Notification			
Prepare an Annual Assurance Statement in accordance with our published guidance, submit it to us between April and the end of October each year, and make it available to tenants and other service users.	This year's statement takes into account the (time limited) updates to the SHR's Regulatory Framework and associated guidance in relation to the preparation of Annual Assurance Statements. Details are both are clearly set out for the Board in the report seeking approval.	Our existing Assurance statement is published and available to all tenants and other service users via our own and the SHR's website.	Compliant
Notify SHR during the year of any material changes to the assurance in its Assurance Statement.	There were no material changes to the previous statement during the year	Not applicable	Not applicable
Have assurance and evidence that it is meeting all of its legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.	<p>In practical terms the Group operates a 4 Lines of Defence model that provides assurance to senior management and Board members about the operation of internal controls in place to confirm the Group's meeting legal obligations in these areas. This includes an IA function that delivers risk-based audits that test operation of Line 1 and Line 2 controls in specific areas.</p> <p>In these particular areas where there is defined legislation, we have Group wide policies which codify how we will meet out legislative requirements. Policies are reviewed by expert internal staff and, where appropriate, by external advisors.</p> <p>The Group employs sufficiently qualified individuals to effect the policies, including legal, health and safety and housing.</p> <p>Legal implications set out in all Board reports to ensure any obligations are identified - supported by a team of in house solicitors and external legal advisors.</p> <p>This area has remained under review during</p>	<p>Group policies and associated documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Board approved Health and Safety Policy detailing legal requirements - Group Policy Framework on Advice and Letting - Group Fire Mitigation Framework - Group Anti Social Behaviour Policy Framework <p>Board reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Health and Safety policy Board report, followed by update reports and specific reports relating to the pandemic - Board update reports on Fire Safety - Board updates during the pandemic on compliance related activity - Board updates during pandemic on service levels and remobilisation relative to the then prevailing pandemic related legislation and/or restrictions - Risk appetite and analysis sections in Board reports - Strategic risk registers <p>Independent assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal Audit activity <p>External assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engagement of independent experts on asbestos 	Compliant
Notify SHR of any tenant and resident safety matters which have been reported to, or are being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive, or reports from regulatory or statutory authorities, or insurance providers, relating to safety concerns.	These circumstances have not arisen in year.		Not applicable
Make its Engagement Plan easily available and accessible to its tenants and service users, including online.	<p>Scottish Housing Regulator Engagement Plans are available on each RSL website.</p> <p>Copies are also available on request from any Local Office.</p>	The plan can be accessed via individual RSL websites in the 'about us' and 'get involved' sections.	Compliant
Register all requirements for providing data to us with the Information Commissioner's Office as a purpose for which they are acquiring data under the Data Protection Act 2018.	<p>Privacy Impact Statements confirm the purposes for which we hold and use data, including for regulatory requirements.</p> <p>All RSLs are registered with ICO.</p>	ICO registration is verifiable via its website.	Compliant
Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance			
Submit an Annual Return on the Charter to us each year in accordance with our published guidance.	The Annual Return requires to be submitted via the SHR Portal. The ARC return is reviewed and agreed by relevant Boards and reviewed internally against the SHR technical guidance.	The SHR Portal documents receipt of our ARC return and the SHR also publishes our Charter return on their website.	Compliant

<p>Involve tenants, and where relevant other service users, in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information. It must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ' agree its approach with tenants - ' ensure that it is effective and meaningful – that the chosen approach gives tenants a real and demonstrable say in the assessment of performance - ' publicise the approach to tenants - ' ensure that it can be verified and be able to show that the agreed approach to involving tenants has happened - ' involve other service users in an appropriate way, having asked and had regard to their needs and wishes. 	<p>At the most senior level, we have tenants on our Boards and, within GHA, we have Area Committees.</p> <p>The ongoing level of involvement of our Local Committees, Registered Tenant Organisations, Communities of Interest and Scrutiny Panel has been impacted for part of the year by the pandemic, however the approach itself is established and embedded. The extension of the deadline of the Annual Report to Tenant to the end of the calendar year will allow us to engage the Scrutiny Panel in its preparation.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RSL constitutions reserving Board places to tenant members - GHA Area Committee Terms of Reference - Stronger Community Voice consultation document <p>Board/Committee/Forum discussions and reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area Committee reports and minutes - Group Scrutiny Panel meeting agendas <p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Scotland external independent support provided to Group Scrutiny Panel <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RSL websites publicly set out the report 	Compliant
<p>Report its performance in achieving or progressing towards the Charter outcomes and standards to its tenants and other service users (no later than October each year). It must agree the format of performance reporting with tenants, ensuring that it is accessible for tenants and other service users, with plain and jargon-free language.</p>	<p>We publish an annual report to tenants, the format of which has been agreed by Boards and the Group Scrutiny Panel. This year's report is not due to be issued until the end of December in line with the updates to the SHR Regulatory Framework.</p>	<p>Prior year published Annual Report to Tenants</p>	Compliant
<p>When reporting its performance to tenants and other service users it must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide them with an assessment of performance in delivering each of the Charter outcomes and standards which are relevant to the landlord - include relevant comparisons – these should include comparisons with previous years, with other landlords and with national performance - set out how and when the landlord intends to address areas for improvement - give tenants and other service users a way to feed back their views on the style and form of the reporting. 	<p>Included in the last Annual Report to Tenants and will be incorporated in this year's, due by the end of December. The relevant comparisons will be dependent on the availability ARC performance data for the sector.</p>	<p>Annual Report to Tenants issued in October 2019.</p>	Compliant
<p>Make the SHR report on performance easily available to its tenants, including online.</p>	<p>This is published via our website</p>	<p>Performance published on RSL websites (Home/About us/How we do business/Performance)</p>	Compliant
Whistleblowing			
<p>Have effective arrangements and a policy for whistleblowing by staff and governing body/elected members which it makes easily available and which it promotes.</p>	<p>We have a Group Whistleblowing policy in place. The policy is available to all staff and an internal staff awareness raising blog was undertaken via intranet recently. The review of the policy is reserved to the Group Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <p>Group Whistleblowing Policy</p> <p>Committee reporting</p> <p>Audit Committee report and minute of discussion and approval of whistleblowing policy</p> <p>Other</p> <p>Director of Assurance intranet blog raising awareness of whistleblowing and signposting to policy</p>	Compliant
Tenants and service users redress			
<p>Make information on reporting significant performance failures, including our leaflet, available to its tenants.</p>	<p>We have a link to the significant performance failure SHR leaflet available on all RSL websites (contact us/complaints and compliments)</p> <p>The SHR leaflet also available in Local Housing Offices as part of the core leaflet suite</p>	<p>RSL Websites (Contact us/complaints and compliments)</p> <p>RSL Complaints Leaflets (make reference to significant performance failures)</p> <p>SHR Leaflets available in local offices</p>	Compliant
<p>Provide tenants and other service users with the information they need to exercise their right to complain and seek redress, and respond to tenants within the timescales outlined in its service standards, in accordance with guidance from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).</p>	<p>The Group Complaints Policy is based on and complies with SPSO guidance. All Boards are made aware that SPSO guidance applies to the complaints handling.</p> <p>Our complaints procedure is set out on RSL websites, our complaints leaflet is available in Local Housing Offices as part of the suite of core leaflets</p>	<p>Group Complaints Policy Board report and record of Board approval</p> <p>Complaints Leaflets</p> <p>RSL Websites (Contact us/complaints and compliments)</p>	Compliant

<p>Ensure it has effective arrangements to learn from complaints and from other tenant and service user feedback, in accordance with SPSO guidance.</p>	<p>Our complaints policy builds in requirement to review and Boards routinely updated on this. Boards received bi-annual updates on complaints and what lessons we are learning from them. This performance data and analysis is also publish on the website.</p> <p>There is a lessons learned field within ASTRA which should be completed to record lessons learned for every complaint received. New complaints reports will capture lessons learned and allow for further analysis of lessons learned including the information recorded by staff within Astra.</p> <p>The standard Board bi-annual report has been delayed post pandemic as business has focussed on more essential activity however complaints performance has remained under review.</p>	<p>Policy - Group Complaints policy</p> <p>Reporting and monitoring - Board performance reports which include measure on complaints handling</p> <p>Public reporting - Complaints data published on RSL Websites</p> <p>Other - ASTRA</p>	Compliant
Equality and Human Rights			
<p>Have assurance and evidence that it considers equality and human rights issues properly when making all of its decisions, in the design and review of internal and external policies, and in its day-to-day service delivery.</p>	<p>In recognition of this feedback, the SHR has stated it now intends to work with representative bodies, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, and Scottish Human Rights Commission ("SHRC") to develop a 'guidance framework'. To allow sufficient time for this guidance to be developed, the SHR will now not start assessing compliance with the requirements until April 2021.</p>		
<p>To comply with these duties, landlords must collect data relating to each of the protected characteristics for their existing tenants, new tenants, people on waiting lists, governing body members and staff. Local authorities must also collect data on protected characteristics for people who apply to them as homeless. Landlords who provide Gypsy/Traveller sites must collect data on protected characteristics for these service users.</p>	<p>We have agreed a new Equality and Diversity policy and also engaged external expertise via IoD Scotland to support the implementation of this policy.</p>		
Requirements for RSLs Only			
Each RSL Must:			
<p>Comply with the Standards of Governance and Financial Management and associated statutory guidance.</p>	<p>See commentary and evidence provided for each of the seven standards of governance and financial management.</p>		
<p>Comply with, and submit information to us in accordance with, our guidance on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - notifiable events - group structures - consulting tenants where tenant consent is required - financial viability of RSLs: information requirements - determination of accounting requirements - preparation of financial statements. 	<p>See commentary and evidence provided for each of the seven standards of governance and financial management.</p>	<p>Landlord Portal</p>	
<p>Keep up to date organisational details in the Register of Social Landlords, by maintaining the information provided through the Landlord Portal.</p>	<p>Organisational details up-to-date and regularly maintained via the SHR Landlord Portal</p> <p>All updated are monitored by Company Secretary and control checks are in place, specifically the portal is reviewed and updated monthly and after every Board cycle</p>	<p>Landlord Portal SHR Website</p>	Compliant

<p>Make publicly available, including online, up to date details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - who is on its governing body - the date when they first became a member/office holder - how to become a member of the RSL and of the governing body, and - minutes of governing body meetings. 	<p>About us section of RSL websites includes information about who is on the governing body and the date they first became an office holder.</p> <p>The 'getting involved' section of each RSL website sets out how to become a member of the RSL (where applicable).</p> <p>The Associations are required to send intimation of the intended date of the Annual General Meeting and information on the nomination procedure for Board Members to all our Members not less than 28 days before the Annual General Meeting.</p>	<p>RSL websites - 'about us' and 'get involved' sections.</p> <p>Published membership policy via website</p> <p>Published minutes via website</p>	<p>Compliant</p>
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Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management	Self-Assessment Commentary	Evidence and sources of assurance	Self Assessment
Standard 1 The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.			
1.1 The governing body sets the RSL's strategic direction. It agrees and oversees the organisation's business plan to achieve its purpose and intended outcomes for its tenants and other service users.	<p>The Group Standing Orders formally define the Board's role in this regard, with the approval of the strategy (strategic direction) and business plan <u>reserved</u> to Boards for approval.</p> <p>The business plan is always considered within the context of outcomes it contributes to achieving for tenants and its implementation is overseen by the budget and finance reports monitored thereafter.</p> <p>We have also additionally reflected on our 5 year strategy since the onset of the pandemic over the course of a number of Board workshops, where the impact on tenants has been at the forefront.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Standing Orders - Governing Body Members Handbook <p>Board discussions and reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board strategy workshop materials - Board reports on strategy development process and associated minutes - Board report on business plan and associated minuted confirming Board approval - Board reports detailing implications for financial projections during pandemic <p>External validation/corroboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Campbell Tickell 2018 governance review findings 	Compliant
1.2 The RSL's governance policies and arrangements set out the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of governing body members and senior officers, and the governing body exercises overall responsibility and control of the strategic leadership of the RSL.	<p>The Group Standing Orders detail respective roles and responsibilities of the Group and subsidiary Boards in the Group Authorising Framework (GAF) and the Group Authorise, Manage, Monitor Matrix (GAMM) as well as detailing the Scheme of Financial Delegation and delegations to Group CEO.</p> <p>Board member roles and responsibilities are set out in the Standing Orders and the Governing Body Member Handbook.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Standing Orders - Governing Body Members Handbook <p>External validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Campbell Tickell governance review - IIP Accreditation 	Compliant
1.3 The governing body ensures the RSL complies with its constitution and its legal obligations. Its constitution adheres to these Standards and the constitutional requirements set out below.	<p>The RSLs are appropriately constituted and the Group Standing Orders set out effective decision making processes.</p> <p>Board minutes and reports will provide details of how constitutional compliance is ensured where applicable.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual entity constitutions - Group Standing Orders - Board report template <p>External validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External legal advisor engagement in the process of drafting and revising constitutions 	Compliant
1.4 All governing body members accept collective responsibility for their decisions.	<p>This is enshrined in the Code of Conduct as a requirement and re-emphasised in the governing body member handbook. No governing body members have breached the code of conduct in this regard, as such no action has been taken.</p>	<p>No issues raised or identified during the year of a Board member not accepting collective responsibility</p> <p>Board appraisal forms and interviews - issue not raised</p> <p>Signed Codes of Conduct</p>	Compliant
1.5 All governing body members and senior officers understand their respective roles, and working relationships are constructive, professional and effective.	<p>The respective roles are set out in the Group Standing Orders and reinforced by the Governing Body Members Handbook which sets out roles clearly and is explicit about the distinction between the role of management and the role of the Board.</p> <p>A comprehensive induction programme is in place, with discussion about the role of the Board and Management.</p> <p>This area is also explored and tested as part of the annual appraisal process.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment and Selection Process and Induction Programme - Group Standing Orders - Governing Body Members Handbook - Governing Board Members Appraisal Policy <p>External Validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Campbell Tickell interviews with Board members as part of previous governance review - IoD interviews as part of Board effectiveness 	Compliant
1.6 Each governing body member always acts in the best interests of the RSL and its tenants and service users, and does not place any personal or other interest ahead of their primary duty to the RSL.	<p>The Standing Orders set out clearly the relationship between the parent Board and subsidiaries and the division of responsibilities.</p> <p>All Board Members are required to sign the Code of Conduct and complete a Governing Body Member Declaration of Interests form which covers this and the organisation maintains a register of interests. There is a standing Board meeting agenda item regarding declaration of interests.</p> <p>Board appraisal has a specific question regarding decision making being in the best interests and no issues have been identified regarding independence of decision making.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board Code of Conduct Group Standing Orders Arrangements in place in respect of conflicts and declarations of interest - standard Board agenda item and Register of Interests form <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Board appraisal - no issues raised by any Chair or Board member 	Compliant
1.7 The RSL maintains its independence by conducting its affairs without control, undue reference to or influence by any other body (unless it is constituted as the subsidiary of another body).	<p>The Group Standing Orders set out clearly the relationship between the parent Board and subsidiaries and the division of responsibilities. The composition of the Board is such that no other body exercises undue control or influence over the group and this is formally documented in Intra Group Agreements</p> <p>The requirement to act in the best interests of the group is reflected in the Group Code of Conduct. All Board Members complete a Governing Body Member Declaration which covers this and the organisation maintains a register of interests.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Code of Conduct Register of Interests form Group Standing Orders Arrangements in place in respect of conflicts and declarations of interest Intra Group Agreement <p>External validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent legal advice for RSL subs on Intra Group Agreement with Parent and on relevant transactions eg MMR stock disposal and GHA/Lowther equity 	Compliant
Standard 2 The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And			

<p>2.1 The RSL gives tenants, service users and other stakeholders information that meets their needs about the RSL, its services, its performance and its future plans.</p>	<p>Each RSL within the group has a website which includes an 'Access to Information' section and a Publication Scheme. This explains clearly and comprehensively what information is available (with links) and how to obtain information which is not published, including fees applicable.</p> <p>Provided via a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - annual report to tenants - newsletters - consultations <p>We ask tenants as part of our Tenant Satisfaction Survey what tenants think about being kept informed.</p>	<p>Publications Subsidiary and group websites Tenants newsletters (e.g. The Key) Information on performance, future plans eg investment and satisfaction results published on websites Annual Report to Tenants</p> <p>External validation BMG Tenant Satisfaction survey</p>	Compliant
<p>2.2 The governing body recognises it is accountable to its tenants, and has a wider public accountability to the taxpayer as a recipient of public funds, and actively manages its accountabilities.</p>	<p>Governing Body Handbook recognise the Group's governing bodies' accountability to tenants and service users (section regarding the role of the Board).</p> <p>Each RSL subsidiary publishes an Annual Report to Tenants, setting out how it has performed.</p> <p>Our Publication Scheme ensures that we provide a significant amount of information , supporting accountability.</p>	<p>Governance Framework Governing Body Members Handbook Annual Report to Tenants Wheatley Group Annual Report and Financial Statements Subsidiary and group websites (investor relations section of website gives information on use of funds, including public funds) Group Code of Conduct Group Engagement Framework</p>	Compliant
<p>2.3 The governing body is open and transparent about what it does, publishes information about its activities and, wherever possible, agrees to requests for information about the work of the governing body and the RSL.</p>	<p>We are committed to being transparent and open about the way we work, the services we provide and the decisions we make. One of the ways we do this is through our publications scheme under The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.</p> <p>We are bound by the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 which gives the public the right to access environmental information we hold.</p>	<p>EVIDENCE: Provided via a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - Annual Report to Tenants - newsletters 	Compliant
<p>2.4 The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.</p>	<p>The previous Strategy (Investing in our Futures) states the intention to ensure customers drive outcomes for their communities, to use customer insight to shape products and services for customers which meet their needs, to target resources according to customer and stakeholder priorities and to ensure all care customers have a say in the support they receive. This is further strengthened in the new strategies, which seek to give tenants more power and control to effect these changes directly.</p> <p>We have also agreed to undertake a survey to seek the views of our customers on our response to pandemic to inform our future decision making.</p> <p>Our Engagement Framework incorporates a variety of ways customers are engaged across the group to shape what the group does. We do this via a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community governance structures - locality planning - use of complaints - annual satisfaction surveys - consultations - tenant members on boards representing service user views <p>Tenant board members bring customer insight to strategic decision making. The Locality Plans have been developed through engagement with customers and stakeholders.</p> <p>The Group operates customer segmentation to understand their customer base and shape services accordingly.</p>	<p>External validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff satisfaction surveys and results - Meetings between senior management and stakeholders - Direct Board engagement with key stakeholders eg Housing Minister - BMG independently facilitated rent setting workshops for 2020/21 rent setting process <p>Decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Board strategy workshop briefing packs detailing background information - Board composition includes tenants - builds in feedback at decision making point - Board report on rent setting - documents extensive consultation feedback <p>Board reporting and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ongoing Board reports on key areas of tenant feedback, including complaints <p>Engagement Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Locality plans, including the range of engagement and feedback events facilitated during the process 	Compliant
<p>2.5 The RSL is open, co-operative, and engages effectively with all its regulators and funders, notifying them of anything that may affect its ability to fulfil its obligations. It informs the Scottish Housing Regulator about any significant events such as a major issue, event or change as set out and required in notifiable events guidance.</p>	<p>We have high engagement and as such meet the SHR on a regular basis as well as having an ongoing line of communication. Regular meetings held with Funders. We notify SHR of 'Notifiable Events' in accordance with requirements of SHR Notifiable Events guidance.</p>	<p>SHR Quarterly Meeting agendas Funder meeting agendas Group Engagement Plan - published by WHG and SHR</p>	Compliant
<p>Standard 3 The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay. Guidance</p>			
<p>3.1 The RSL has effective financial and treasury management controls and procedures, to achieve the right balance between costs and outcomes, and control costs effectively. The RSL ensures security of assets, the proper use of public and private funds, and access to sufficient liquidity at all times.</p>	<p>The Standing Orders set out clear financial delegations and there is an appropriate Treasury Management Policy in place. The Treasury Management policy was reviewed and refined this year and financial information is regularly reported to the Board including compliance with golden rules and covenants.</p> <p>In addition to this we regularly report to Boards and have an extensive discussion each year on financial projections and treasury management, including liquidity. This has been heightened during the pandemic, with scenario testing on potential adverse Covid-19 impacts undertaken and reported to Boards.</p>	<p>External validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review by Rathbones of core business planning assumptions - Group Treasury Management Policy was reviewed by our external treasury advisors - External audit process <p>Governance and Policy Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Treasury Management Policy - Group Value for Money framework - Group Whistleblowing Policy - Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy - Group Standing Orders including financial delegations <p>Ongoing reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly treasury report to Group Board on funding requirements and liquidity - Covenant compliance - Internal Audit core programme of auditing key financial controls - Finance reports to Boards 	Compliant

<p>3.2 The governing body fully understands the implications of the treasury management strategy it adopts, ensures this is in the best interests of the RSL and that it understands the associated risks.</p>	<p>There is a suitable treasury management policy in place, which was reviewed by the Board during the last 6 months.</p> <p>The Board skills matrix is takes into account the need for membership to include Non-Executives with relevant skills and experience i this area.</p> <p>Boards routinely seek sufficient external independent guidance to ensure its decisions are in our best interest, with significant input from external legal advisors.</p>	<p>Board membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Board succession planning specifically seeks to ensure we have individuals with skills and experience in this area <p>Policy Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Treasury Management Policy - Quarterly treasury update to Wheatley Group Board <p>External validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Treasury Management CPD Session (Rathbones) held on 31 October 2018 (slides from session) - Extensive external legal advice on any major funding transactions, specifically in relation to the risks 	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>3.3 The RSL has a robust business planning and control framework and effective systems to monitor and accurately report delivery of its plans. Risks to the delivery of financial plans are identified and managed effectively. The RSL considers sufficiently the financial implications of risks to the delivery of plans.</p>	<p>Business planning process takes into account a wide range of variables, which are reflected in Board reports eg sensitivity testing, assumptions. These were reviewed and tested during the pandemic to reflect the change in risk profile.</p> <p>Financial performance is reported to Board as a standing item detailing performance relative to business plans and budgets.</p> <p>Reports to the Board on financial projections as part of the business planning process set out comprehensive and clearly explained information including appropriate context, detailed financial projections and details of projected compliance with golden rules and covenants.</p> <p>Minutes demonstrate a good level of Board engagement with financial projection reporting. Regular reporting to Board provides clear information about financial performance across the group including all subsidiaries as well as performance against covenants and golden rules.</p> <p>This was declared as an area of material non compliance by DGHP due to not having accurate regarding the effectiveness of its systems to monitor and accurately report delivery of its asset management plans. This was addressed by the full stock condition survey undertaken and subsequent updates to DGHP's reporting system.</p>	<p>External validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent Quality Review of Internal Audit by PwC <p>Board reporting and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual stress testing of business plan as part of Board approval process - Pandemic specific scenario testing on financial projections - Risk register considered by the Group Audit Committee at every meeting and by each Board periodically - Comprehensive review of risk register by Group Audit Committee and Group Board during pandemic - report and associated minutes - Board reports regarding Financial Performance - Treasury management reports 	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>3.4 The governing body ensures financial forecasts are based on appropriate and reasonable assumptions and information, including information about what tenants can afford to pay and feedback from consultation with tenants on rent increases.</p>	<p>Our assumptions are validated externally where appropriate and always subject to sensitivity analysis. As part of agreeing our financial projections each year the rent increase is subject to specific separate report which takes into account affordability for tenants.</p>	<p>Board reporting and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board reports regarding Financial Performance and Financial Projections - Report to Group Board on treasury update and policy - Financial performance report to Group Board and Subsidiary Board meeting - Minutes of Group and Subsidiary Board meetings - Risk Registers -Tenant rent setting consultation results 	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>3.5 The RSL monitors, reports on and complies with any covenants it has agreed with funders. The governing body assesses the risks of these not being complied with and takes appropriate action to mitigate and manage them.</p>	<p>We have an on-going process and report compliance as part of finance report to Group Board in addition to projected compliance being a consideration when assessing and agreeing our financial projections.</p>	<p>Board reporting and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial performance and treasury reports to Group Board - Report to Boards on financial projections 	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>3.6 The governing body ensures that employee salaries, benefits and its pension offerings are at a level that is sufficient to ensure the appropriate quality of staff to run the organisation successfully, but which is affordable and not more than is necessary for this purpose.</p>	<p>All staff gradings are subject to an internal assessment using defined criteria by Employee Relations.</p> <p>The pension arrangements are routinely reviewed by the Board/RAAG and this included changes for auto enrolment to not offer SPF to all incoming employees. This was on the basis that it was not necessary to attract employees.</p> <p>Overall staffing costs and their impact are considered as part of the financial projections.</p>	<p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Standing Orders <p>Board reporting and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confidential minute of RAAG report to Board on Chief Executive's remuneration - Financial projections - Dual pension arrangements in place for GHA 	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>3.7 The governing body ensures the RSL provides accurate and timely statutory and regulatory financial returns to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The governing body assures itself that it has evidence the data is accurate before signing it off.</p>	<p>All returns are submitted to the SHR. Where appropriate, Regulatory returns (such as 5 year financial projections, loan portfolio) are included on the agendas for all RSL Board meetings in May. The same is also true of the Annual Return on the Charter (also May.) Governing Body requires formal Board reports to be provided with clear recommendations about sign-off.</p> <p>DGHP declared material non compliance on this area in its previous Statement, related to their non compliance under Standard 3.3 rendering them unable to assure the information submitted to the SHR. Tis has been addressed by the completion of a full stock condition survey and systems updated to allow data to be extracted and furnished to the SHR.</p>	<p>Board reporting and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board papers and agendas 	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>Standard 4 The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose. Guidance</p>			
<p>4.1 The governing body ensures it receives good quality information and advice from staff and, where necessary, expert independent advisers, that is timely and appropriate to its strategic role and decisions. The governing body is able to evidence any of its decisions.</p>	<p>Board reports are structured in a Board approved standard format with specific headings to ensure appropriate information is contained in key areas such as finance, risk and legal/regulatory.</p> <p>Board feedback on reports is received during meetings as well as part of the annual Board appraisal.</p>	<p>Board reporting and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board reporting template - Board meeting papers - Board and Committee minutes <p>Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation <p>External Assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Campbell Tickell review of governance arrangements, including the quality of Board papers. 	<p>Compliant</p>
<p>4.2 The governing body challenges and holds the senior officer to account for their performance in achieving the RSL's purpose and objectives.</p>	<p>This is primarily discharged via Board meetings.</p>	<p>Board reporting and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board Reports and associated minutes 	<p>Compliant</p>

4.3 The governing body identifies risks that might prevent it from achieving the RSL's purpose and has effective strategies and systems for risk management and mitigation, internal control and audit.	We have a clearly defined risk management framework. This is reviewed on an ongoing basis. Risk analysis is a specific element of all Board papers and therefore embedded in our decision making at Board level. Where there is a particular risk there is an enhanced level of Board reporting on specific risks as has been in place throughout the pandemic.	Group policies - Risk management policy Governance framework - Group Standing Orders and Audit Committee Terms of Reference Board reporting and monitoring - Reports to Group Audit Committee and all RSL Boards - Minutes relative to the above	Compliant
4.4 Where the RSL is the parent within a group structure it fulfils its responsibilities as required in our group structures guidance to: (a) control the activities of, and manage risks arising from, its subsidiaries; (b) ensure appropriate use of funds within the group; (c) manage and mitigate risk to the core business; and (d) uphold strong standards of governance and protect the reputation of the group for investment and other purposes.	The role and controls of the Parent are codified in all subsidiary constitutions, along with the roles and responsibilities set out in Intra Group agreements and the Group Standing Order. Examples of this include Parent approval rights over areas such as Board appointments, constitutional changes, policy and funding. In addition to this, our standard reporting arrangements are such that the Group Board always receives Group wide performance information as well as details of any material issues at individual subsidiary level.	Governance Framework - Constitutions - Group Standing Orders - Intra Group Agreement Board reporting and monitoring - Board packs	Compliant
4.5 The RSL has an internal audit function. The governing body ensures the effective oversight of the internal audit programme by an audit committee or otherwise. It has arrangements in place to monitor and review the quality and effectiveness of internal audit activity, to ensure that it meets its assurance needs in relation to regulatory requirements and the Standards of Governance and Financial Management. Where the RSL does not have an audit committee, it has alternative arrangements in place to ensure that the functions normally provided by a committee are discharged.	We have a clearly established Group Audit Committee with a remit including oversight of internal audit. The IA team is required to have an External Quality Assessment at least every 5 years to give the AC assurance on the quality and effectiveness of the Internal Audit function. (Last completed in 2015 and 2018)	Governance framework - Audit Committee Terms of Reference Board reporting and monitoring - Assurance Update Board Reports - Group Audit Committee reports External - IA EQA	Compliant
4.6 The governing body has formal and transparent arrangements for maintaining an appropriate relationship with the RSL's external auditor and its internal auditor.	This is clearly defined via the Group Standing Orders, mainly within the purview of the Group Audit Committee	Governance framework - Audit Committee Terms of Reference	Compliant
Standard 5 The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity. Guidance			
5.1 The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity and, through the actions of the governing body and staff, upholds the good reputation of the RSL and the sector.	The Wheatley Group Code of Conduct and Conflicts Policy sets out expectations. Staff are also bound by the Code of Conduct and HR Policies. We have a Whistleblowing Policy and Anti-fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy. This has been strengthened for the Group Board via stronger provisions for dealing with any suspected breaches, with the power now in place to enforce vacation of office.	Governance framework - Group Standing Orders - Group Code of Conduct (governing body and staff) - Whistleblowing policy	Compliant
5.2 The RSL upholds and promotes the standards of behaviour and conduct it expects of governing body members and staff through an appropriate code of conduct. It manages governing body members' performance, ensures compliance and has a robust system to deal with any breach of the code.	We operate a Group Code of Conduct which all members are required to sign up to. It includes arrangements to deal with any breach of the code. An appraisal system is in place to manage governing body performance. Similar arrangements are in place for staff via HR policies and the Staff code of conduct.	Governance framework - Group Code of Conduct and Conflicts Policy - Governing Body Appraisal Policy	Compliant
5.3 The RSL pays due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and human rights, and foster good relations across the range of protected characteristics in all areas of its work, including its governance arrangements.	Our leaders empower all employees to live the Wheatley Group values; Trust, Community, Excellence and Ambition. The values are integrated into the My Contribution appraisal process. This is also embedded in our HR policies	Group policies and associated documents - Wheatley Group Values - HR policies including Dignity at Work and Employee Code of Conduct - Group Governing Body Member Code of Conduct and Conflicts Policy - Group Equality and Diversity policy	Compliant
5.4 Governing body members and staff declare and manage openly and appropriately any conflicts of interest and ensure they do not benefit improperly from their position.	We operate a register of interests and declarations of interest is a standing item on Board meeting agendas.	Group policies and associated documents - Group Code of Conduct and Conflicts Policy - Register of Interests form - Group policy on gifts, hospitality, payments and benefits Board reporting and monitoring - Minutes of Board meetings - Example of standing item on Board meeting agendas	Compliant
5.5 The governing body is responsible for the management, support, remuneration and appraisal of the RSL's senior officer and obtains independent, professional advice on matters where it would be inappropriate for the senior officer to provide advice.	Group CEO appraisal is undertaken by Group Chairman and remuneration levels are set by the Board based on previous SHR Recommended practice such as relevant benchmarking and metrics such as pay per home. The Board accesses independent professional advice and holds discussions without the Group Chief Executive where appropriate.	Group governance framework - Group Standing Orders Board reporting - Reports to RAAG Committee and Group Board on Group CEO terms and conditions.	Compliant
5.6 There are clear procedures for employees and governing body members to raise concerns or whistleblow if they believe there has been fraud, corruption or other wrongdoing within the RSL.	We have specific Whistleblowing and Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policies in place, approved by the Group Audit Committee.	Group policies - Group Whistleblowing policy - Group Fraud, Corruption and Bribery policy	Compliant

5.7 Severance payments are only made in accordance with a clear policy which is approved by the governing body, is consistently applied and in accordance with contractual obligations. Such payments are monitored by the governing body to ensure the payment represents value for money. Alternatives to severance must be considered including redeployment.	Our existing approach to ER/VR consists of two elements: our individual policies on Early Retirement and Redundancy and affordability criteria we apply agreeing any form of what may be classified as a 'severance payment'. We engage external legal advice in relation to any settlement agreements.	Group policies and associated documents - Policies on redeployment, redundancy and early retirement linked to redundancy (GHA, Cube, Loretto, WLHP, Dunedin Canmore and Barony) - Legal Advice regarding severance	Compliant
5.8 Where a severance payment is accompanied by a settlement agreement this must not be used to limit public accountability or whistleblowing. RSLs must take professional legal advice before entering into a settlement agreement.			Compliant
Standard 6 The governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective. Guidance			
6.1 The RSL has a formal, rigorous and transparent process for the election, appointment and recruitment of governing body members. The RSL formally and actively plans to ensure orderly succession to governing body places to maintain an appropriate and effective composition of governing body members and to ensure sustainability of the governing body.	We have undertaken a comprehensive review of our succession plans in light of the pandemic to ensure we maintain an appropriate and effective composition. Recruitment vacancies are always advertised and subject to: - the process set out in constitutions - recruitment policy - RAAG committee agreement The Board undertake an annual appraisal process.	Group governance framework - Group Standing Orders Appendix 3A Governing Body Recruitment Policy and Procedures - Group Standing Orders [Appendix 3B Governing Body Appraisal Policy and Group Succession Planning Policy - Sub Board skills matrices and succession plans	Compliant
6.2 The governing body annually assesses the skills, knowledge, diversity and objectivity it needs to provide capable leadership, control and constructive challenge to achieve the RSL's purpose, deliver good tenant outcomes, and manage its affairs. It assesses what is contributed by continuing governing body members, and what gaps there are that need to be filled.	Annual appraisal is in place and the policy includes self assessment together with a 1-2-1 review with Chair to evaluate performance. The Group has an appropriate Succession Planning Policy in place.	Group governance framework - Constitutions - Group Standing Orders [1 - Appendix 3B Governing Body Appraisal Policy and Group Succession Planning Policy] Board reporting and monitoring - Board appraisal report to Group Board; - RSL Board Succession Plans - Board induction process - Subsidiary Board reports on appraisal and succession Feb 2020	Compliant
6.3 The RSL ensures that all governing body members are subject to annual performance reviews to assess their contribution and effectiveness. The governing body takes account of these annual performance reviews and its skills needs in its succession planning and learning and development plans. The governing body ensures that any non-executive member seeking re-election after nine years' continuous service can demonstrate their continued effectiveness.	An annual appraisal process is in place and the policy includes self assessment together with a 1-2-1 review with the Chair to evaluate performance. During this year we reappointed a small number of Non-Executives beyond 9 year's service. In agreeing this the Board specifically gave consideration to the individual's ongoing effectiveness and independence.	Group governance framework - Constitutions - Group Standing Orders [1 - Appendix 3B Governing Body Appraisal Policy and Group Succession Planning Policy] - Board induction process - Board CPD Programme Board reporting and monitoring - Board appraisal report to Group Board; - 3-year Succession Plans including specific agreement to extend beyond 9 years and assessment of continued effectiveness to support this	Compliant
6.4 The RSL encourages as diverse a membership as is compatible with its constitution and actively engages its membership in the process for filling vacancies on the governing body.	Our approach was reviewed in year and agreed by all relevant Boards taking into account this Regulatory Standard	Group policies - Membership Policies Group governance framework - Constitutions Board reporting - reports to individual Boards regarding membership changes and assessing compliance with this standard as part of the changes agreed	Compliant
6.5 The RSL ensures all new governing body members receive an effective induction programme to enable them to fully understand and exercise their governance responsibilities. Existing governing body members are given ongoing support and training to gain, or refresh, skills and expertise and sustain their continued effectiveness.	We have a structured approach to board induction and CPD. In addition to this, we take into account operating context, with tailored CPD delivered during the pandemic on virtual meetings.	Induction and training - Induction process - CPD programme - Institute of Directors (IoD) induction programme session on the Role of a Non-Exec Director	Compliant
6.6 If the governing body decides to pay any of its non-executive members then it has a policy framework to demonstrate clearly how paying its members will enhance decision-making, strengthen accountability and ownership of decisions, improve overall the quality of good governance and financial management and deliver value for money.	The Group Governing Body Remuneration Policy sets out the Group's approach to remuneration - which is to remunerate non-executive positions in order to attract and retain those with the right talents, skills and experience. The remuneration is based on a number of principles, which are set out in the Policy.	Group policy framework - Governing Body Remuneration Policy - Governing Body Member Remuneration Benchmarking Report Board reporting and monitoring - Board reports	Compliant
6.7 The governing body is satisfied that the senior officer has the necessary skills and knowledge to do his/her job. The governing body sets the senior officer's objectives, oversees performance, ensures annual performance appraisal, and requires continuous professional development.	This is overseen via the Group Chair, who undertakes an annual appraisal of the Group Chief Executive and provides feedback to the Group RAAG Committee and Group Board.	Board reporting and monitoring - Confidential minutes of RAAG report to Group Board.	Compliant
Standard 7 The RSL ensures that any organisational changes or disposals it makes safeguard the interests of, and benefit, current and future tenants. Guidance			
7.1 The governing body discusses and scrutinises any proposal for organisational change and ensures that the proposal will benefit current and future tenants.	The Barony change was reviewed and approved by both the Barony and Group Boards taking into account the implications for tenants.	Board reporting and monitoring - Board reports - Board minutes	Compliant

7.2 The RSL ensures that its governance structures are as simple as possible, clear and allow it to meet the Standards of Governance & Financial Management, Constitutional Requirements, and Group Structures guidance.	We operate a relatively flat and simple corporate structure. Governance Review with advice from Campbell Tickell, supports recent decision to rationalise the Group by dispersing activities of Barony and ultimately winding one entity up. We have now also agreed to consider the Group structure further as part of the Cube strategic review. Intra-group agreements are in place between the parent and each subsidiary.	Group governance framework - Group Standing Orders - Intra-Group Agreements External validation - Campbell Tickell Governance review Board reporting and monitoring - Board packs	Compliant
7.3 The RSL ensures adequate consultation with, and support from, key stakeholders including tenants, members, funders (who may need to give specific approval) and local authorities as well as other regulators.	The Barony change involved significant engagement with key stakeholders, including Local Authorities and the Care Inspectorate	Board reporting and monitoring - Board reports Other - Exchanges with Local Authorities and Care Inspectorate	
7.4 The governing body is satisfied that the new (or changed) organisation will be financially viable, efficient and will provide good outcomes for tenants.	This was assessed fully in relation to Barony, in the case of DGHP this was pre Group	Board reporting and monitoring - Board reports - Board minutes	
7.5 The RSL establishes robust monitoring systems to ensure that delivery of the objective of the change and of commitments made to tenants are achieved (for example in relation to service standards, operating costs and investment levels).	This applies within the Barony and DGHP context. We have clear monitoring arrangements in place for ensuring commitments to tenants are monitored and delivered. These will also be reported to the relevant Boards on an ongoing basis. As the more significant change, the DGHP commitments are reported at DGHP and Group Board level as part of the Transformation Programme	Board reporting - reports to DGHP and Group Boards - Repots to WLHP and DCH Boards on Barony tenant commitments such as rent increase levels	Compliant
7.6 Charitable RSLs seek consent/ notify OSCR of changes to their constitution and other changes as appropriate.	In progress for current rule changes. OSCR approval sought prior to Barony Trasfer of Engagements and dissolution	Formal notification documents to OSCR	
7.7 The governing body ensures that disposals, acquisitions and investments fit with the RSL's objectives and business plan, and that its strategy is sustainable. It considers these taking account of appropriate professional advice and a consideration of value for money - whether as part of a broader strategy or on a case by case basis.	This is not an ongoing requirement, rather a requirement to be met if and when such activity happens. Such activities remain reserved to the Board unless otherwise delegated under very clear criteria.	Board reporting and monitoring - Barony Board report - GHA Board reports	Compliant
7.8 The RSL complies with regulatory guidance on tenant consultation, ballots and authorisation.	This has applied to the Barony reorganisation in year. As part of this process we engaged throughout with the SHR and reviewed the regulatory guidance in advance of agreeing the key milestones.	Board reports relating to the Barony reorganisation and the associated tenant consultation documentation.	
7.9 The RSL notifies the Regulator of disposals in accordance with regulatory guidance.	We have a clear, robust internal process in place for ensuring that all disposals are notified to the SHR. All staff who are potentially involved in disposals are clear on where this triggers a notification requirement.	SHR Portal holds records of all notifiable disposals.	Compliant
7.10 The RSL only agrees fixed or floating charges where the assets are used to support core activities. This should exclude providing security in relation to staff pensions.	The Group funding structure is split between 'RSL' and 'Others.' Wheatley Funding No. 1 Limited (WFL1) was formed as a special purpose vehicle to facilitate funding the Group RSLs from bond issuance and bank lenders. WFL1 borrows funds from the bond issuer and banks and on-lends them to the RSLs within the Group in accordance with the criteria set out in the Intercompany Loan Agreements. The Bond is secured against Group Properties. These Charged Properties are named in the Bond Trust Deed and there are requirements to notify the Trustee if the Group wants to add, substitute, release or dispose of a property charged against the Bond loan value. A Secured stock spreadsheet is maintained by the Treasury Team. Annual Valuations on the Group Assets are undertaken by JLL including separate valuations for each funder against assets. In addition, Prudential Securities provides its own report on funding against the Group Assets which Treasury reconcile quarterly against their own records.	Corporate records - Financial records of RSLs and WFL1 - Security spreadsheet	Compliant

Appendix 3

The constitution of the RSL must comply with all legislative requirements under the 2010 Act (which are not replicated here) and the following regulatory requirements:	Self-Assessment Commentary	Evidence and sources of assurance	Self Assessment
	All RSL rules take into account the SFHA Charitable Model Rules, subject to us ensuring that they reflect our own needs. All constitutions are subject to a) review by individual Boards b) review by our external legal advisors, and c) agreement by members.		Compliant
1. It sets out clearly the RSL's purpose, objects and powers.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association and supporting Board papers at time of approval. Harper MacLeod are involved in the preparation of all constitutional changes.	Compliant
2. The RSL is able to fulfil its obligations in terms of its legal status and (if relevant) its obligations as a registered charity. These obligations and how they will be met are set out in the constitution.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association and supporting Board papers at time of approval. Harper MacLeod are involved in the preparation of all constitutional changes.	Compliant
3. There is a system for keeping accounts and ensuring an independent audit by an appropriately qualified person. There is a proper procedure for appointing an auditor. The governing body should take whatever measures are necessary to ensure the continuing independence of the auditor including periodic review of the need for audit rotation. The RSL must send a copy of its accounts and the auditor's report to us within six months of the end of the period to which they relate.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association and supporting Board papers at time of approval. Harper MacLeod are involved in the preparation of all constitutional changes.	Compliant
4. It is clear what investments and borrowing the governing body can authorise.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association and supporting Board papers at time of approval. Harper MacLeod are involved in the preparation of all constitutional changes.	Compliant
5. There is a procedure for dealing with disputes on matters contained within the constitution.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association and supporting Board papers at time of approval. Harper MacLeod are involved in the preparation of all constitutional changes.	Compliant
6. It is clear how changes can be made to the constitution.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association and supporting Board papers at time of approval. Harper MacLeod are involved in the preparation of all constitutional changes.	Compliant
7. It is clear how the RSL can be closed down.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association and supporting Board papers at time of approval. Harper MacLeod are involved in the preparation of all constitutional changes.	
8. The RSL can demonstrate its governance and financial arrangements are such as to allow the Regulator to regulate effectively, and exercise our full regulatory powers.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association and supporting Board papers at time of approval. Harper MacLeod are involved in the preparation of all constitutional changes.	Compliant
In relation to an RSL within a group structure:			
9. Each organisation within the group must have a distinct legal identity and separate constitution. The constitutional and financial relationships between all organisations in the group (registered or non-registered) must be documented formally and in terms that are transparent and understandable.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
10. If any of the organisations within the group are charities, the RSL's role and relationships with other group members are consistent with charity law.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
11. The constitutions of group members must enable the parent to exercise control and to take corrective action where required.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
12. There are procedures in place designed to avoid conflicts of interest, particularly where members of the subsidiary's governing body are also members of the parent's governing body.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
13. Where it is constituted as a subsidiary of another body, the RSL's constitution permits control by the parent but with sufficient independence to carry out its business, within limits set by the parent.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
With regard to the governing body of the RSL and the members of the governing body:			
14. Recruitment to the governing body is open and transparent. It is clear who is eligible to become a member of the governing body and how to become a member of the governing body whether by election, nomination, selection, etc and how membership is ended. There is a procedure for removing members from the governing body.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
15. There is a procedure by which members stand down from the governing body to allow for a turnover in membership. Governing body members are appointed for specific terms subject to re-election or re-appointment.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
16. The membership of the governing body must be no fewer than seven and not normally exceed 15 members, including co-opted members. Names of the governing body members must be accessible to the public.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
17. The powers and responsibilities of the governing body are clearly set out.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
18. The roles, powers and responsibilities of governing body office bearers are set out. And any delegation to committees or staff are clearly set out in standing orders and delegated authorities.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
19. There are provisions for the RSL to remove a governing body member who does not sign up to the code of conduct and to take action against or remove a governing body member in breach of the code.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
20. Where the constitution allows executive staff on to the governing body, they must be excluded from holding office, and cannot form a quorum or a majority. Executive members of the governing body should not receive any additional payment for their governing body role over and above what they are entitled to under their contract of employment.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
21. It is clear what types of meetings can and should be held and their purpose. There are clear procedures to call all meetings, and it is clear what the quorum of meetings should be, how resolutions will be passed, and decisions recorded, and how many meetings should take place each year, subject to a minimum of six governing body meetings a year.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
22. The governing body cannot act for longer than two months if its membership falls below seven. If at the end of that period it has not found new members then the only power it will have is to act to bring the governing body members up to seven.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant

23. There is a clear process to identify and address any conflicts of interest on the governing body.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
24. The Chairperson's role is set out formally; the Chairperson is responsible for the leadership of the governing body and ensuring its effectiveness in all aspects of its role. There is a clear process to select the Chairperson, who cannot be an executive member, and must not hold office continuously for more than five years.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
25. If the RSL pays any of its non-executive governing body members then it must ensure that: a) the governing body takes account of independent guidance in setting payment amounts and can demonstrate value for money; b) the payments are linked to specified duties and there is a clear process for assessing performance in carrying out these duties; c) details of governing body payments are published in the RSL's annual accounts; and d) where an RSL has subsidiaries it must ensure any payments and benefits to subsidiary governing body members are included in the policy. Charitable RSLs must comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and any associated guidance from the charity regulator when considering payments or benefits to charity trustees.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
26. The role and status of co-optees is set out. Co-optees do not form part of any quorum required for meetings of the governing body and may not vote on matters directly affecting the constitution and membership of the organisation or the election or appointment of its office bearers.		All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant
With regard to the general membership of the RSL:			
27. It is clear who is eligible to become a member of the RSL and who cannot, and it is clear how to become a member and how membership is ended. Names of the members must be accessible to any other member or anyone with an interest in the RSL's funds.	This is detailed through a combination of constitutions and membership policies	All RSL Rules/Articles of Association - Membership policies	Compliant
28. Membership of the RSL should reflect the purpose and objects of the RSL.	Members for GHA and WHG are the Board, so by definition reflect the purpose and objects as they set them - Other RSLs have membership policy which set out the membership. Membership primarily open to tenants, Board members and the Parent .	All RSL Rules/Articles of Association - Membership policies	Compliant
29. There is a clear procedure, including the quorum and voting procedure, for the membership of the RSL to meet and it is clear what business the membership can discuss and what decisions it can make, subject to a minimum of one annual meeting.	Clearly detailed within each constitution	All RSL Rules/Articles of Association	Compliant

Report

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Lynsey Fotheringham, Head of Housing

Approved by: Olga Clayton, Group Director of Housing and Care

Subject: Corporate Risk Register

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide a revised West Lothian Housing Partnership (WLHP) Corporate Risk Register at **Appendix 1** for approval by the WLHP Board (the Board).

2. Authorising context

- 2.1 In accordance with the Group Authorise/Monitor/Manage Matrix, the Group Board is responsible for managing and monitoring the Wheatley Group Risk Management Framework. Our Board is responsible for managing and monitoring its Corporate Risk Register and Risk Appetite in accordance with the Group Risk Management Framework.
- 2.2 Risk registers are in place across reported to the board on a bi-annual basis.

3. Risk appetite and assessment

- 3.1 Our agreed risk appetite in relation to Governance is “cautious”, meaning that tolerance for risk taking is limited to events where there is little chance of any significant repercussion should there be a failure.

4. Background

- 4.1 Under its Terms of Reference, the Group Audit Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the risk-management framework within the Group. The Wheatley Group Board approved changes to the Strategic Risk Register at its meeting in August 2020. These risks have been considered when updating the Corporate Risk Register.

5. Discussion

5.1 Key strategic risk areas have been identified through a high-level review of WLHP evolving strategies, operational risks and the current operating environment. A full copy of the proposed WLHP Corporate Risk Register is included at **Appendix 1**. This includes details of existing mitigating controls and residual risk scores.

5.2 The following table provides a summary of our Corporate risks including (i) removed risks, (ii) added risks, (iii) changed risks, and (iv) unchanged risks.

Risk Code	Risk Title	Summary of change
Removed		
WCRR01	Information and Communications Technology	No longer a significant risk on the Group Strategic Risk Register.
WCRR13	Neighbourhood Environmental Teams (NETs)	Change to WLHP's environmental operating model is now embedded as business as usual, with good levels of customer satisfaction.
WCRR19	Strategic Planning	No longer a significant risk on the Group Strategic Risk Register.
Added		
WCRR22	Service remobilisation post Covid-19	New risk added to reflect current challenges associated with remobilisation of services following lockdown.
WCRR23	Ongoing threat of future waves of Covid-19	New risk added to reflect unknown business environment associated with future waves of Covid-19.
WCRR24	New Operating Model Implementation	New risk added to reflect risks associated with planned organisational change delivery.
WCRR25	Post-2021 Housing Policy and Grant availability	New risk added to reflect the impact of any change in Scottish Government Housing Policy after 2021.
Changed		
WCRR02	Business Continuity/ Disaster Recovery	Control description updated to align wording with Group's Strategic Risk Register and add that Group Assurance are monitoring progress and robustness of plans.
WCRR04	Rent arrears including Universal Credit	Title changed from 'Welfare Reform' and description amended to reflect risks associated with loss of income. Updated controls and scores in place aligned to Group Strategic Risk register.

Risk Code	Risk Title	Summary of change
WCRR07	Political & Policy changes	Risk description and controls updated to reflect Brexit risk and the Group's policy of not building homes for sale.
WCRR08	Failure to recruit, develop, retain and succession plan.	Control description updated in alignment with Group Strategic Risk register.
WCRR09	Compliance with Legislation	Risk description and controls updated in line with revisions to the Group Strategic Risk Register.
WCRR10	Pension Contributions	Risk title changed from 'Pension funds' and risk description and controls reviewed to widen risk to cost of all pension contributions, in line with Group Strategic Risk Register.
WCRR11	Repairs	Minor amendment to risk description to remove reference to 'new' principal repairs contractor. New control added to reflect change in stock profile.
WCRR14	Brexit Trade Deal	Risk title changed from 'Supply Chain' and risk description updated to reflect Brexit risk in line with Group Strategic Risk register.
WCRR15	Securing new funding and adverse market changes	Risk title changed from 'Funding Availability' and updated risk and controls to reflect latest position, consistent with Group Strategic Risk Register. New inherent and residual risk scores.
WCRR16	Compliance with funders' requirements	Risk title changed from 'Loan Security' and updated risk and controls to reflect latest position, consistent with Group Strategic Risk Register. New inherent and residual risk scores.
WCRR17	Group Credit Rating	Risk description updated to expand risk to wider external factors, as well as Brexit.
WCRR18	Cyber Security	Risk description, controls and current risk score revised in line with Group Strategic Risk Register.
WCRR20	Customer Satisfaction	Risk title changed from 'Customer Experience Strategy' and risk description and controls revised to reflect the importance of customer satisfaction with our homes and services, including new customer groups. New current risk score.
WCRR21	Building Safety	Title changed from 'Fire Safety'. Risk and controls descriptions updated to focus on measures in place to protect health and safety of customers and staff, in line with Group

Risk Code	Risk Title	Summary of change
		Strategic Risk register. Recognition given to management of HMO's which is new for WLHP.
Unchanged		
WCRR03	Governance Structure	No Change
WCRR06	New build Development Programme	No Change
WCRR12	Mid-Market Rent developments	No Change

6. Key issues and conclusions

6.1 The updated Risk Register **Appendix 1** is presented to the Board for approval.

7. Value for money implications

7.1 There are no direct implications arising from the requested approval of the Corporate Risk Register.

8. Impact on financial projections

8.1 No direct financial implications result from the management and review of the Corporate Risk Register. Any actions taken by management to mitigate risks, which have financial implications, would be presented to the Board separately.

9. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

9.1 The effective management of risk satisfies the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management, which requires governing bodies to identify and mitigate risks to the organisation's purpose.

10. Partnership implications

10.1 There are no direct partnership implications arising from this report.

11. Implementation and deployment

11.1 Whilst responsibility for implementing the Group Risk Management Framework rests with the Group Board, our Board has responsibility for the management and monitoring of our corporate risks. However, it is incumbent upon all management teams and employees to embrace "good practice" risk-management principles at all times.

12. Equalities impact

12.1 There is no impact to equalities arising from this report.

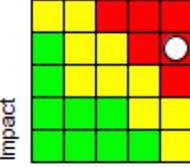
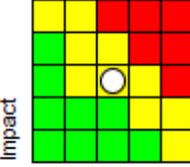
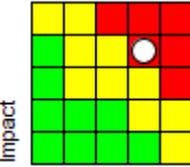
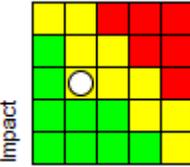
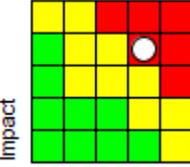
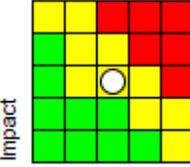
13. Recommendation

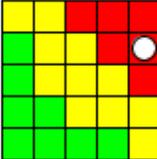
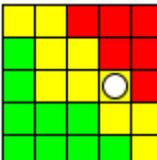
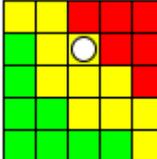
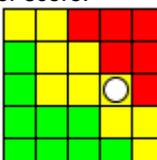
13.1 The Board is asked to approve the revised Corporate Risk Register and confirm it appropriately captures the current corporate risks.

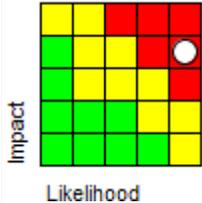
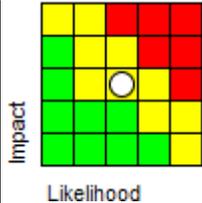
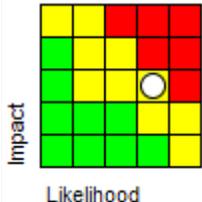
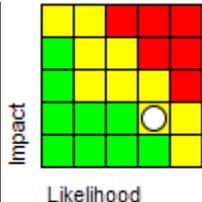
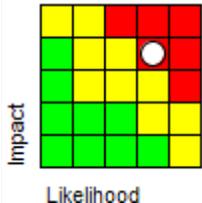
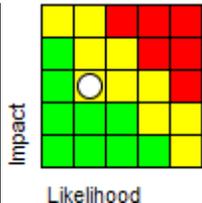
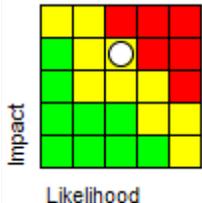
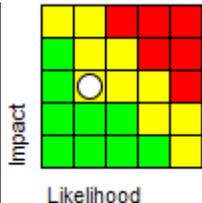
List of Appendices

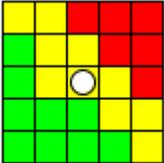
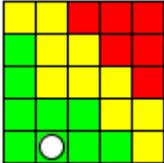
Appendix 1 – WLHP Corporate Risk Register – Draft for Approval

**Appendix 1
WLHP Corporate Risk Register November 2020**

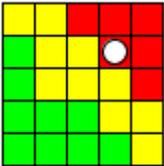
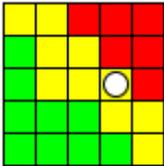
Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
WCRR01 Information and Communications Technology	Failure to transform services, as detailed in the Group IT and Digital Strategy by the innovative use of Information and Communications Technology to keep pace with the changing demands of internal and external service users.	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	<p>The Group IT & Digital Strategy (2017 – 2020) is in place; which details key delivery milestones to be achieved by responsible managers. Infrastructure and project management disciplines are now embedded.</p> <p>The ET and Wheatley Board continue to monitor the delivery of the Strategy.</p> <p>Group Assurance to provide assurance over the progress of key projects within the Strategy with reports going to the Audit Committee.</p> <p>Proposed Actions: New technology strategy for 2020-25 is being drafted.</p>	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	Open
WCRR02 Business Continuity / Disaster Recovery	WLHP may not have adequate or tested Business Continuity / Disaster Recovery plans in place for key business activities, including those with significant contractors, resulting in significant disruption to service and avoidable reputational damage. Office is at risk of flooding in extreme wet weather conditions (board room)	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	<p>A business continuity implementation Group is responsible for collating, reviewing and designing the Group's Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plans.</p> <p>A programme for annual live testing of these plans exists and is monitored by Lead Director.</p> <p>A programme to annually test these plans has been developed.</p> <p>Group Assurance continue to monitor progress and robustness of plans.</p> <p>BCP refreshed (July 2018) and co-created by all team members based within Bathgate Office.</p>	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	Cautious
WCRR03 Governance Structure	The <u>governance structure</u> is not clearly defined, is overly complex and lacks appropriate skills at Board and Committee levels to govern the Group effectively. Failure of corporate governance arrangements could lead to serious service and financial failures.	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	<p>The Group's authorising environment has been agreed and the Corporate Strategy highlights the importance of the need for continual Board development enabling the Board and Committee members to remain strategically focused, and governance training is provided as appropriate. Formal succession planning for all Board members is being developed. Governance</p>	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	Cautious

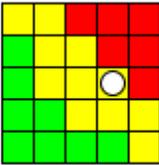
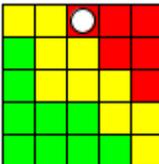
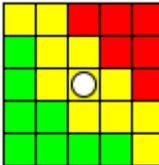
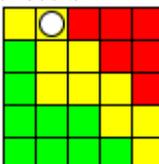
Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
			arrangements are regularly reviewed by external consultants, internal and external audit functions.		
<p>WCRR04 Rent arrears including Universal Credit</p> <p>Welfare Reforms</p>	<p>The impact of Covid-19, as well as the continued expansion of Universal Credit, continue to impact on our rental income stream and increase our arrears.</p> <p>This also has negative impacts for customers, with increasing financial hardship.</p> <p>Welfare Reforms such as Universal Credit cap reduces our guaranteed income stream from Housing Benefit and potentially the overall percentage of rent collected, which may adversely impact the Group's cash flow, leading to a reduction in lenders' confidence and increased poverty and affordability issues for our customers.</p>	<p>New score:</p>  <p>Prior score:</p> 	<p>Staff across the Group – including frontline housing teams, the customer service centre and communications – run ongoing campaigns and programmes of contact with customers affected by financial hardship and with problems in paying their rent, whether caused as a result of Covid-19, the wider issues with Universal Credit or for other reasons.</p> <p>This includes a dedicated Universal Credit team, use of GoMobile for staff to assist customers with online transactions and working with partners to influence the UK and Scottish policy and funding environment.</p> <p>-Staff have had specific Universal Credit Training -A Universal Credit Champion has been appointed within the team -Attendance at Rent and Income CoE -Socio-economic tool that will allow us to assess the impacts on the organisation and target interventions at individual level, producing a cross-organisational action plan and project group to take forward mitigations across the business. Also working with key partners to assess the impact on WLHP and sharing impact information with partners who are lobbying Government directly. -A Group Universal Credit team has been established to support subsidiaries to manage existing UC cases and better prepare for new cases. -A Universal Credit sub-group has been created as part of the Rent and Income Community of Excellence.</p>	<p>New score:</p>  <p>Prior score:</p> 	Cautious

Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
WCRR06 New Development Programme	Failure to deliver the new build programme in accordance with Business Plan growth targets, impacting on; (i) effective utilisation of borrowed money; (ii) WLHP's reputation with its customers and other RSLs, (iii) WLHP's growth and market share and (iv) WLHP's financial position and (v) compliance with the Groups golden rules for borrowing money.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Building strong relationships with council and other external partners. -Regular monitoring and management of delivery in conjunction with the Group investment team. -Group Specialists support for managing difficult contract situations. -Monitoring compliance with the Group's golden rules. -Escalations – regarding Jarvie Street Development. 		Open
WCRR07 Political and Policy Changes	<p>The risk that political and policy changes (both Scottish and UK) affect the ability of WLHP to deliver strategic objectives resulting in significant adverse reputational impact.</p> <p>For example: Brexit will result in the withdrawal of EU grant funding which will affect the Group's total income.</p>		<p>The current policy and political environment brings a degree of uncertainty. WLHP has an established stakeholder management framework in place and relevant Managers will be focussed on responding to changes in policy and administration as they arise.</p> <p>The Group's policy of not building homes for sale also mitigates potential property market risk.</p>		Cautious
WCRR08 Failure to recruit, develop, retain, and succession plan	Failure to recruit, develop, retain and succession plan for high quality / qualified staff, resulting in reduced levels of service provision, staff not competent to perform their job to expected standard and achieve strategic objectives.		<p>My Contribution process for all staff / Training Logs for all staff / Training courses at the Academy and online/ Leadership Development programme / Succession Planning and talent management programme/ HR policies on recruitment and selection / Employee satisfaction surveys.</p> <p>IGNITE graduate programme in place to bring in new talent.</p>		Open
WCRR09 Compliance Legislation	Non-compliance with statutory law and regulations, including but not limited to: (i) Scottish Housing Regulator and Care Inspectorate regulations (ii) Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulations, (iii) compliance with Health and Safety Building Regulations (iv) Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act, and (v) General Data Protection Regulations, resulting in adverse feedback, loss in confidence from Regulator, the Scottish Information Commissioner, Freedom of		<p>Compliance Plan monitored on an ongoing basis and any issues raised to Executive Team and Audit Committee on an exception basis. Ongoing relationship management with Regulator.</p> <p>Qualified personnel undertaking capital improvement works as well as suitable sign off and compliance checks of new installations (eg. external wall coverings), to ensure these meet relevant building standards.</p>		Averse

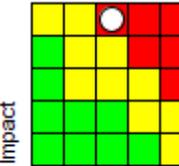
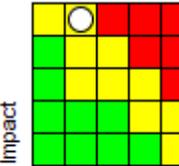
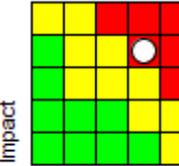
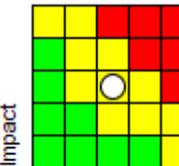
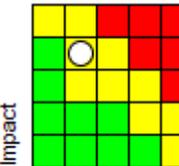
Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
	Information Act, compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (2018), funders, customers and potential partners, as well as potential fines and penalties.		<p>Annual assurance statement provides a source of assurance against non-compliance.</p> <p>A Group wide Scottish Housing Charter Assurance process is being established supported by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviewing outcomes.</p> <p>FCA regulations are considered when new products and services are developed.</p> <p>New product offerings follow a clear route to governance, with approval required from the Executive Team before formal approval is requested from the Group Board.</p> <p>Legal and financial advice is obtained for all financial offerings to customers.</p> <p>Group wide approach to how the Group manages information.</p> <p>Privacy Impact Statements to be implemented across the Group.</p> <p>Changes to existing legislation are identified and implemented by identified responsible officers across the Group.</p>		
<p>WCRR10</p> <p>Pension contributions</p> <p>Pension Deficit</p>	<p>Increases in the required pension contributions (including pension deficit contributions) for WLHP pension fund (total deficit: £47k in 16/17), may leads to potential cost pressures for WLHP, if additional contributions to these funds are required.</p> <p>In addition, there is a future risk of material cessation costs being incurred</p>	 <p>Likelihood</p>	<p>The Group's Pensions Policy sets out a range of measures to manage pension costs. We have established a Wheatley Group defined contribution scheme which will be the default arrangement for new joiners and auto-enrolment in future for most subsidiaries, except where prior approval of the RAAG Committee is received.</p> <p>The potential risk of paying additional contributions has been monitored. Pension Fund Managers have</p>	 <p>Likelihood</p>	Averse

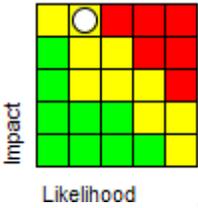
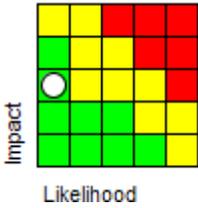
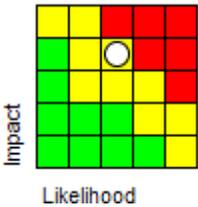
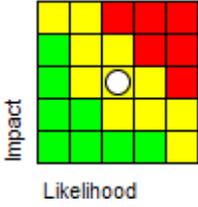
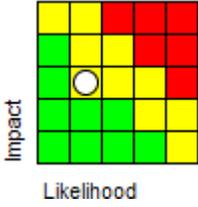
Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
	for the Lothian Pension Fund (if number of scheme members falls to 5 or below).		intimated that there will be no increase to employer's contribution in the short to medium term. In the meantime, this risk will continue to be monitored.		
WCRR11 Repairs	Interdependencies and capacity issues in using WLHPs new principal repairs contractor (Dunedin Canmore) impacts on customer service and tenant satisfaction with repairs.	<p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Monitoring of tenant satisfaction with repairs -Monitoring by WLHP management of operational delivery -Scheduled meetings between WLHP Management and Dunedin Canmore repairs personnel to discuss service delivery -Monitoring by repairs contractor (Dunedin Canmore) of staff utilisation and quality of workmanship. -Understanding of stock profile 	<p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	Open
WCRR12 Mid-Market Rent developments	Existing tenants may be unclear on their eligibility in applying for new build Mid-Market Rent properties leading to increased potential for customer dissatisfaction. <i>It is acknowledged this is low risk, in an area with open risk appetite. However, management currently wish to monitor this risk and have retained the risk on the WLHP Corporate Risks Register.</i>	<p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear communications to tenants in relation to MMR new build programme, including pricing structure - Standard approach developed for dealing with customer enquiries in relation to MMR. - Escalations regarding the Jarvie Street Development. 	<p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	Open
WCRR13 Neighbourhood Environmental Teams (NETs)	Due to a change in WLHP's environmental operating model, sharing services with Dunedin Canmore and Barony, there is an increased risk of lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities for management of WLHP NETs personnel which could lead to operational inefficiency and a reduction in levels of customer satisfaction.	<p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Liaison meetings between WLHP Senior Management and NETs Management - Regular 1:2:1's between WLHP NETs staff and WLHP Housing staff; 	<p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	Open

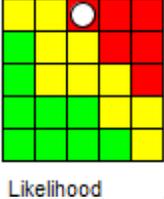
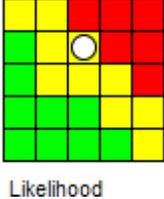
Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
WCRR14 Brexit trade deal Supply Chain	<p>The absence of a Brexit trade deal could result in restrictions to free trade, which could adversely impact the Group and its contractors' supply chains. Specific risks relate to availability / cost of materials and / or availability of trades.</p> <p>This could result in increased costs for new build and property investment works.</p> <p>Supply Chain A potential no deal Brexit and/ or poor Brexit deal could result in the end of, or service restrictions to trade, which could adversely impact the Group and its contractors supply chain. Specific risks relate to availability / cost of materials and / or availability of trades. This could result in; (i) Repairs service — delays in completions; (ii) Investment programme — delays / cost increases (ii) New build — delay to meet delivery targets / increased costs; (iv) Operational Supplies — delays in delivery / cost increases</p>	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Procurement procedures include assessment of suppliers' financial health. -Proactive monitoring of supply chains by Operational leads -Regular contract management meetings -Regular engagement with Scottish Government on cost / delay impact potential as issues emerge. In the event of supplier insolvency, procurement frameworks / approved supplier listings would be used to identify alternative suppliers. <p>Repairs Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage stock levels of components and materials - Engagement with key suppliers - Specific contingency plans for key services e.g. lifts - Local staff directly employed by CBG or DCPS <p>Investment Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage stock levels of components and materials - Engagement with key suppliers <p>New Build</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procurement with fixed tender costs for 2019/20 site starts - New framework in procurement to maintain competitiveness - Engagement with SG on cost increase impact on grant applications - Monthly project monitoring to identify early issues relating to materials availability - Consideration of long term mitigation e.g. change of specification to locally sourced materials and components where practicable - Monitor availability of trades on site – consider increased site monitoring to ensure quality of workmanship <p>Operational Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilisation of Group and 3rd party frameworks to minimise price increase risk -Engagement with key suppliers on stock levels 	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	Cautious

Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
<p>WCRR15 Securing new funding and adverse market changes</p> <p>Funding Availability Linked to SRR07</p>	<p>Wider economic and/or political conditions could cause <u>deterioration in the funding market</u>, for example another banking crisis or constitutional changes causing investor uncertainty. This could limit our ability to raise borrowing at cost-effective rates or raise the required funds to meet our liquidity Golden Rules, thereby increasing the risk that <u>we do not have enough available cash</u> to meet our commitments or achieve our business plan objectives.</p> <p>Our new £185m EIB loan has a clause that means it may no longer be available should the EIB's treaty privileges and immunities not be continued post Brexit. These are contained in the draft Withdrawal Agreement so may be at risk in a no-deal scenario.</p>	<p>New score:</p>  <p>Prior score:</p> 	<p>Our strategy is to diversify funding sources and relationships, providing a range of options for future funding in the event of adverse funding market changes.</p> <p>Our liquidity Golden Rules are designed to ensure that we have sufficient cash available for 15 months + 25% contingency, and this rule is re-assessed annually by the Group Board. Compliance with these is reported to the Group and WFL Boards quarterly.</p> <p>We do not borrow in currencies other than sterling to reduce exchange rate risks, including in the event of a potential future change in currency, nor do we borrow from non-UK domiciled investors (with the exception of the EIB).</p> <p>The Group's Internal Rate of Return (for appraising and approving projects) will be revised when finance costs increase to ensure new build projects do not become loss-making</p> <p>Legal mitigations agreed in contract — cancellation of the loan is not automatic, EIB has the right to negotiate alternative mitigations if it wishes. We have drawn £85m of the £185m facility. We consider the risk to cancellation of availability to be higher than cancellation of drawn funds.</p> <p>Maintenance of strong relationship with EIB — we maintain regular contact and support EIB widely, eg in events in other member states, to cement our status as potentially a special case/relationship and our new relationship manager is known to the WHG Finance team.</p> <p>Significant alternative funding streams put in place late 2018 to provide a liquidity buffer — this includes €£150m of new funding to provide c2 years of cash requirement even without EIB. This funding boost was a key determinant in the S&P upgrade from negative to stable outlook.</p>	<p>New score:</p>  <p>Prior score:</p> 	<p>Averse</p>

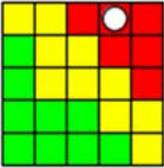
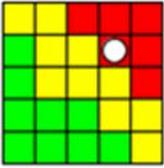
Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
<p>WCRR16 Compliance with funders' requirements</p> <p>Loan Security</p>	<p>Failure to meet/maintain the requirements of funders and investors could have a range of impacts, from default on loan agreements (i.e. covenants) to general loss of confidence. This could adversely impact on our ability to raise new funding to deliver strategic objectives.</p> <p>Loan security In the event of a significant housing market downturn, the value of our assets held as security for our loans could fall. This principally affects properties valued at the Market Value Subject to Tenancy ("MV-ST") basis. We have £794m of security valued at MV-T, and £1,135m at the lower, discounted cash flow basis of Existing Use Value - Social Housing ("EUV-SH").</p>	<p>New score:</p> <p>Prior score:</p>	<p>Regular meetings with funders and investor representatives to update on financial status of the Group.</p> <p>Financial performance monitored monthly and covenant compliance reviewed quarterly by the Group Board, before being submitted externally to funders.</p> <p>Covenant compliance monitoring tool introduced by Finance.</p> <p>Financial performance is monitored on an ongoing basis through monthly reporting cycle and Group/subsidiary Board review of management accounts.</p> <p>Subsidiary and Group Business Plans are subject to annual updates and review by respective Boards. In addition, ongoing dialogue is maintained with relevant credit rating agencies in order to mitigate the risks of unexpected rating changes.</p> <p>We currently have £128m of unencumbered stock on an EUV-SH basis available to charge as additional security (which would take 6-9 months to legally secure). MV-T stock requires a higher asset cover ratio than EUV-SH stock, so depending on any fall in value we may "flip" some stock to an EUV-SH basis. We continue to discuss any valuation impacts with our valuer JLL and have run a number of scenarios which show that we could reallocate existing stock and secure unencumbered stock (albeit with a time lag) to mitigate even the Bank of England's no-deal downside case of a 26% fall in house prices.</p>	<p>New score:</p> <p>Prior score:</p>	<p>Averse</p>

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WCRR17 Group Credit Rating	<p>The Group's <u>credit rating</u> is downgraded, adversely impacting our ability to raise funds on the capital markets or potentially impacting on the cost of debt to the Group.</p> <p>External factors such as a no-deal Brexit could lead to a down grade in the Group's credit rating. This could trigger potential prepayment of our European Investment Bank loans if the rating falls to BBB+ or below.</p>		<p>The Group's business plan is designed to maintain a strong stand alone credit rating, for example excluding build for sale. Our financial Golden Rules include maintaining strong levels of liquidity to mitigate refinance risks.</p> <p>Ongoing dialogue is maintained with relevant credit rating agencies in order to mitigate the risk of unexpected rating changes which are controllable.</p> <p><i>Mitigation drafting used in legal clauses</i> - in the event the rating fell to BBB+, the legal clauses are specific that this is not an event of default (thereby avoiding cross-default).</p> <p><i>Negotiation period</i> – the legal clauses provide for a period to negotiate with EIB on mitigating measures, such as revisions to covenants or posting of increased security/collateral.</p> <p><i>Standby funders to replace EIB if necessary</i> – A strong relationship is maintained with EIB to mitigate future risk from external factors causing a credit rating downgrade. Strong investor/lender relationships are maintained with a number of other organisations at all times in case of unanticipated funding need.</p>		Averse
WCRR18 Cyber Security	<p>The Group's approach to Cyber Security is not robust and staff are not actively engaged due to culture or poor staff understanding; or knowledge of the subject, the Group's response to it or their individual role. This is particularly important with increased home working across the Group.</p> <p>A lack of compliance with the approach and arrangements made could lead to greater opportunity for cyber-attack, resulting in unplanned system downtime, data loss, reputational damage, customer dissatisfaction and potential legislative or regulatory breach.</p>		<p>IT Cyber security live tests undertaken and results reported to ET, Audit Committee and Group Board. Annual Security 101 training undertaken by all staff to provide knowledge of Cyber Security.</p> <p>Group IT has an information and cyber security approach that covers i) overall Information Security Policy for Group, and ii) staff engagement and training across 5 key learning themes.</p> <p>Established processes across key risk areas: Information Security Response / Access Controls / Secure Disposal / Group Data Protection Policy /IT Cloud Services Policy / Vendor Security Assessments.</p> <p>Group IT is externally assessed annually on information security and IT general controls via 3rd party auditors.</p>	<p>New score:</p>  <p>Prior score:</p> 	Averse

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	Exposure of the Group to increased cyber security attacks and threats increases the potential to lose sensitive customer information, leading to financial penalties and significant reputational damage for the Group		A Bi-Annual cyber security assessment is conducted by NCC across 20 key control areas. An internal Information Security Working Group has been established within technical teams across Group IT.		
WCRR19 Strategic Planning	Ineffective strategic planning may result in failure to achieve corporate objectives due to lack of direction for staff and Board, impacting quality of service being delivered to Service User.		WLHP has developed effective strategic planning, including defined business and financial planning processes and awareness of its external environment. A defined management structure is in place across WLHP. Progress of business plan and implementation are reported to Board and strategic objectives fed down through organisation into departmental and individual staff objectives which are clear with SMART targets.		TBC
WCRR20 Customer satisfaction Customer Experience Strategy	<p>Customers do not feel our homes and services meet their needs and/or the standards they expect, leading to declining customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Failure to successfully on-board our new customer group results in poor customer engagement and declining customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Changing internal and external factors influence the customer profile and needs across the Group. This includes all areas of our business (e.g. housing, care, commercial operations and support services). If all these areas are not well understood by the Group, then service development and growth opportunities may be pursued which may not reflect the needs of our customers.</p>		<p>Customer service excellence is a key element of the 2015-20 group strategy, with annual customer satisfaction surveys to help us understand customer views and detailed action plans to address feedback every year. This will continue as part of our 2021-26 strategy, augmented by a range of new approaches to improve satisfaction among particular target groups such as young families.</p> <p>Small housing officer patch sizes of 1:200 allow housing staff to deliver personalised services under the ThinkYes approach.</p> <p>Our housing stock investment programme includes provision for addressing customer priorities and ballot promises to incoming Barony customers.</p> <p>Customer insight research project lead by the Strategic Policy and Development Team. This is further informed by our customer segmentation model, drawing live external data from a range of sources.</p> <p>In terms of specific areas, Housing Officers collect customer data in customer conversations which are</p>	<p>New score:</p>  <p>Prior score:</p> 	TBC

Code & Title	Description	Original risk score (with no controls in place)	Existing Controls / Monitoring & Check	Current Risk score (with mitigating controls in place)	Risk Appetite
			<p>logged on the CRM. Care Managers have on-going discussions with people they work for. The commercial strategy considers the economic landscape and Group support services meet with internal customers to better understand their needs and have set up frameworks to monitor customer feedback and satisfaction.</p> <p>Monitoring implementation of the Customer Experience strategy by Executive Team and the Wheatley Board.</p>		
<p>WCRR21 Building Safety Fire Safety Regulations</p>	<p>The risk that the health and safety of our customers and staff is put at risk through failure to comply with all relevant building health and safety rules, including HMO Licence requirements.</p> <p>The continuously changing nature of regulations and guidance in this area, for example in relation to fire safety, elevates the risks in relation to continuing compliance.</p> <p>Changes to building safety / fire safety regulations / Fire Services advice (e.g. changes to evacuation guidelines) results in (i) financial strain in complying with new additional fire safety regulations, (ii) strain on bond and loan covenant ratios and (iii) significant financial costs in terms of potential penalties as well as costs to comply with new regulations.</p>		<p>Business Planning to provide for any additional costs.</p> <p>External review commissioned by the Assurance Team, of our Fire Safety arrangements every 2 years.</p> <p>Community Improvement Partnership focused on fire prevention and education.</p> <p>Business Continuity Plans.</p> <p>Fire Prevention and Mitigation Framework including our approach to high rise block inspections and Fire Risk Assessments.</p> <p>Robust processes are in place to ensure the appropriate management of HMO licences, including monitoring of expiry dates.</p> <p><u>Proposed control</u> – Ongoing discussions on future management arrangements</p>		<p>Averse</p>

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WCRR22 Service remobilisation post Covid-19	<p>A lack of clear planning, coherence and communication with staff and customers in our service remobilisation planning as we move through the Scottish Government's Covid recovery phases could lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> poor or inconsistent service outcomes customer and staff confusion and frustration, including an increase in complaints risks to customer and staff health and safety (for example if PPE requirements are not properly understood and delivered) deterioration in trade union and stakeholder relationships 		<p>Service remobilisation plans must meet strict criteria and be approved by the Exec Team. Governance oversight is provided by all Boards. Services cannot move between different stages of remobilisation without a full review of lessons learned from the previous stage and a further gateway approval from the Exec Team.</p> <p>The following are key components of each service's remobilisation plans and must be approved by the Exec Team at each stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and safety implications/forecast requirements of PPE can be met Furloughing implications are agreed and understood Customer views from the previous stage service model have been assessed and any lessons learned understood Trade union partners have endorsed the proposals for remobilisation 		Cautious
WCRR23 Ongoing threat of future waves of Covid-19	<p>The risk of future waves of Covid-19 along with the risk of a second period of lockdown (either Scotland wide or by geographical area) potentially through winter months may result in previously remobilised services being paused. For example, a reduced ability to let homes will result in reduced income.</p>		<p>Through lessons learnt from previous lockdown and remobilisation, services are planning for future waves. In addition, business continuity plans are being revisited to plan for future waves.</p> <p>Housing officers can now deliver services from home. Targeted visits to hard-to-engage customers when allowed by Government guidelines. Housing officers can now take payments in Astra, without need to engage CSC colleagues.</p>		Cautious
WCRR24 New operating model implementation	<p>The implementation of a new operating model as we emerge from the Covid-19 crisis, including changing staff patterns/places of work, reducing the number of offices and placing greater reliance on technology could be poorly</p>		<p>Once the Group Board agrees any changes, a detailed implementation and communications plan has been developed as part of the change process. This includes the approach to communicating with all staff involved.</p>		Open

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	implemented and communicated, leading to staff disengagement and lack of support from our trade union partners.		Trade union partners have been consulted on changes and are supportive. We will continue to engage with our Union partners throughout the process.		
WCRR25 Post-2021 Housing Policy and Grant availability	There is a risk that a reduction in the availability of grant (both in terms of availability and allocation levels) resulting from a change in Scottish Government Housing Policy after 2021, results in a failure to fully deliver the new build programme and other investment objectives set out within the 2021 – 2026 Strategy.	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	<p>Wheatley Group staff are meeting with Scottish Government representatives regularly to proactively present the case for housing investment to Ministers and senior officials directly and through our representative bodies SFHA and CIH.</p> <p>Financial scenario planning in place to understand potential impact on the new build programme and other investment requirements of a variety of reduced grant allocation scenarios.</p>	 <p>Impact</p> <p>Likelihood</p>	Cautious

Report

To: West Lothian Housing Partnership Board

By: Ranald Brown, Director of Assurance

Subject: Assurance update 2020/21

Date of Meeting: 18 November 2020

1. Purpose

1.1. This report provides the Board with a status update on the delivery of Group's Internal Audit work for 2020/21.

2. Authorising context

2.1. In accordance with the Group Authorising Framework, the Board is responsible for managing and monitoring West Lothian Housing Partnership's compliance arrangements and operational performance. The activities undertaken by the Assurance team provide the Board with independent assurance to support this role of the Board.

2.2. The Group Audit Committee has responsibility for instructing and keeping under review the long-term plan for internal audit within the Group, approving the annual Group Assurance Plan (the Plan) and monitoring results as presented in the annual internal audit report and assurance statement.

3. Risk appetite and assessment

3.1. The Board's agreed risk appetite in relation to Board Governance is "open", meaning that there is appetite to take decisions that might expose us to additional scrutiny, but only where appropriate steps have been taken to minimise any exposure.

4. Background

4.1. As a result of the COVID19 lockdown in March 2020, the Group Audit Committee agreed to the suspension of the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan. As a result, the Internal Audit Team was temporarily furloughed.

4.2. There were two reasons for this:

- At the time of a crisis the internal audit plan was not a priority. Continuation of core services was the paramount consideration.
- The Group was best served by internal audit stepping back temporarily and giving business units breathing space to get on dealing with the crisis.

- 4.3. This was an approach taken by many internal audit functions across the UK.
- 4.4. To respond to the increased Cyber Security risks associated with COVID19 and our new working practices, an external health check of this area was completed by Scott Moncrieff in July 2020. A summary of the findings are detailed in **section 5** of this report.
- 4.5. At the August Group Audit Committee, it was agreed that Internal Audit would be remobilised and that the audit approach would be revised to reflect the current working environment. This is detailed in **section 6**.

5. Cyber Security Review

Report Summary

- 5.1. Scott Moncrieff's overall conclusion is detailed below.
- 5.2. *"IT security over the systems and services that the IT function is responsible for is well established and, as described by management, reflects good practice in many respects. Cyber Security is an organisation wide challenge, and it is important that processes exist to ensure that cyber security risks are being managed across the enterprise, and specifically beyond the areas for which IT is operationally responsible."*

- 5.3. This report has not been graded as it was a health check.

Scope of Review

- 5.4. Due to COVID19 restrictions this review was conducted remotely. Information was gathered via a series of detailed interviews. Documentation was provided for review remotely.
- 5.5. The scope of this work was restricted to the Cyber Security control environment over services provisioned to Group staff by the IT function. As such, a number of services which are not provisioned by the IT function were outside the scope of this review. These services include Payroll, MyHousing, LMS, Capita Payments, AllPay – DirectDebits and Alertacall and are subject to external testing (eg penetration testing) as part of their contract.
- 5.6. The objective of this review was to provide an independent assessment of the Cyber Security controls in place, understand important changes in this control environment arising from the COVID response and post-COVID planning, and feedback on planned future developments. To support this, assessment control objectives were drawn from the National Cyber Security Centre's Cyber Assessment Framework ("CAF"). Scott Moncrieff assessed controls over the following areas:

A. Managing Security Risk

- Governance
- Risk Management
- Asset Management
- Working from home policies and procedures

B. Protection Against Cyber Attack

- Service Protection Policies and Procedures
- Identity and Access Control
- Data Security
- System Security
- Resilient Networks and Systems
- Staff and Customer Awareness and Training

C. Detect Cyber Security Events

- Security Monitoring
- Proactive Security Event Discovery

D. Minimising Impact of Cyber Security Incidents

- Response and Recovery Planning
- Lessons Learned

5.7 Due to the high-level nature of this review, no testing of the control environment was performed. The objective of this review was to provide feedback on control design as reported by the individuals interviewed. Documentation provided was reviewed to aid the auditor's understanding of the controls discussed, it was not used to support testing of controls.

Findings

5.8 The review highlighted the following areas of good practice:

- For an organisation of this size and complexity, IT security over the systems and services that the IT function is responsible for is well established and, as described by management, reflects good practice in many respects.
- There are IT security policies and processes in place covering areas such as Server Hardening, Patch Management, Back-ups, Disaster Recovery and User Identity and Access Management. There is also a bi-annual National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) cyber security review to identify areas for improvement, and external and internal penetration testing of critical services is commissioned. IT security measures are regularly assessed and externally audited with improvements driven by these assessments.
- Anti-malware, firewall, network, desktop and server monitoring software is in place to detect security events and potential security issues.
- A Cyber Security Incident Response Plan (CSIRP) and a defined cyber response team area in place, the CSIRP includes escalation paths and is reviewed annually.
- The IT function reviews security requirements on an ongoing basis and is in the process of considering or implementing a number of initiatives designed to enhance the security control environment. These include, for example, the Security Incident and Event Management Project, engaging with the business in the development of the IT Security control environment and implementing enhanced tools and services to manage Cyber Security threats.

5.9 Scott Moncrieff made three key recommendations to further enhance the Cyber Security control environment across the Group in relation to:

- Introduce a Group wide Cyber Security Oversight to ensure that cyber security risks are being managed across the enterprise, and specifically beyond the areas for which IT is operationally responsible. For example, across the supply chain, within services commissioned and delivered without IT oversight, and across the digital transformation programme.
- Engage wider business leads in Cyber Security decision making to identify and assess security risks arising from across the Digital Programme. The process for identifying and sequencing risk management activity should be set out, and the process for identifying people to be involved in these assessments should be defined.
- Develop further remobilisation planning Cyber Security relating policies and procedures (eg Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards and working from home) to assist staff in the new way of working.

These actions will be considered as part of the Group's wider review of the operating model. Dates for delivering these areas will be agreed as part of that exercise. The agreed dates will be reported to the Group Audit Committee in due course.

6. Post COVID-19 Group Internal Audit Approach

6.1. The August Group Audit Committee agreed the Group's remobilisation plan for Internal Audit services. To prepare for reinstating internal audit work, the Director of Assurance has been working with the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) to see how the sector is responding to the "new norm". The agreed approach reflects the sectors current thinking. The following summarises the new approach.

1) Identify high risk-high priority issues to support management determine the most pressing issues that need to be addressed.

2) Tell management internal audit are here to help

3) Become a real-time control adviser to become an active and agile participant in the Group's continuity and recovery actions by providing real-time advisory and control services.

4) Take off our internal audit hat to help the Group with whatever needs to be done; even if that means stepping into roles and tasks that take away internal audit independence.

In summary, the IIA are recommending changes in the previous ways of working and that this is the opportunity to modernise how work is done to make it timely, more relevant and more efficient.

Implementation of the new methodology

6.2. The remobilisation of Internal Audit commenced from 1 August and a number of assumptions were agreed with the Group Audit Committee, as follows:

- The previously agreed **2020-21 Internal Audit Plan** will no longer apply. The Plan will be reviewed in early 2021.

- **Agility** is key – the planned areas of work will be subject to ongoing review and will be revisited quarterly and agreed with the Group Audit Committee.
- **Internal audit outputs will be different** – our usual reports (with gradings) will change to real time and shorter outputs. Findings will not be graded at this time, as we do not want to be seen as criticising people. Instead, we need to be supportive in setting up systems that are appropriate for this challenging time.
- Our **initial 3 months** work will focus on supporting Directors developing an appropriate control environment for new systems that are required immediately (eg health and safety and fire safety).
- More focus will be on **data analytics** to provide assurance on key cycles (we will use our IDEA software) initial areas will be on expenditure and staff payroll exception reports.
- Most work will be done **remotely**.
- **Follow up** of outstanding recommendations will be done later on in the year.
- **Streamlined Audit Committee reporting** – to focus in on key areas during recovery stage.

6.3. The agreed workplan up to 30 November focuses on the following areas:

- Fire Risk Management Arrangements
- Post COVID19 Gas Safety Arrangements
- Post COVID19 Health and Safety Arrangements (including PPE arrangements relating to Care and Emergency Repairs)
- Supporting Managing Directors in updating their Risk registers

6.4. The findings of these reviews, along with the proposed rolling 3 month Internal Plan, will be reported to the November Group Audit Committee. A summary of these reviews will be reported to Subsidiary Boards in early 2021. If there are any significant findings, these will be reported to the relevant Subsidiary Board Chair when they arise.

7. Value for money implications

7.1. Through more focused, responsive planning activity, the Assurance team's work can be directed to those reviews which are more complex, resulting in greater added value to the Group to support the value for money objectives.

8. Impact on financial projections

8.1. There are no financial implications as delivery involves a redirection of resources within the Assurance Team.

9. Legal, regulatory and charitable implications

9.1. The SHR Regulatory Standards require RSLs to have an internal audit function. Undertaking Assurance activity satisfies the Scottish Housing Regulators' Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management which requires governing bodies to identify and mitigate risks to the organisation's purpose.

10. Partnership implications

- 10.1. There are no direct partnership implications identified within this report. In 2020/21 we will continue to work in partnership with Glasgow City Council's Internal Audit team and City Building Glasgow to provide the Group Audit Committee with comfort on the strength of City Building's control environment.

11. Implementation and deployment

- 11.1. Implementation and deployment of the Plan will be led solely by the Group Assurance Team. Implementation of actions arising from Assurance activity will be the responsibility of the action owners identified within individual audit reports.

12. Equalities impact

- 12.1. This report does not require an equalities impact assessment.

13. Recommendation

- 13.1. The Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

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