



Corporate Plan

2018 - 2023



CORPORATE PLAN SUMMARY 2018-2023

We continue to operate in a challenging environment, but one that can also provide us with opportunities. The Government have signalled their intention to deliver more new homes (c 300,000 a year by the mid 2020's) to provide solutions to meet demand through a range of housing products including more affordable homes; we are ever mindful to provide tenants with value for money services reducing costs where we can; we need to continue to meet the Government's decent homes standard whilst protecting the safety of our tenants and; we need to continue to manage the transition away from housing benefit to universal credit as part of the Government's welfare reform changes.

The tragedy of the Grenfell Tower disaster in June 2017 has predicated the announcement of a Green paper by the Government on the future of social housing that will be a *“wide-ranging, top to bottom review of social housing focusing on safety issues; service management and tenants' rights.”* We understand that this will lead to major changes in the way social tenants voices are heard, their concerns addressed and how organisations like ourselves work within our communities so that they are valued, have the opportunities to grow and can thrive as a result.

Significantly more housing is needed across the Country to meet the housing shortage and Gloucester is no different with a waiting list of almost 4,000. We therefore welcome the Government's £15.3 billion boost in funding for more housing and infrastructure programmes announced in the November 2017 budget and we will make bids as and when appropriate to fund future development schemes.

We are a preferred development partner of the Joint Core Strategy outlining the areas for new housing development and commercial growth in Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury up to 2031. In October 2017, the Planning Inspectorate gave final approval to the plan with modifications with increases in the number of new homes originally planned because of economic growth and the need for more affordable housing. As a result the original estimate was 31,800 new homes and this has now been uplifted to 35,175. There are 14,359 new homes required in Gloucester to meet future need and so we will work closely with the Council and our partners to support them with delivery.

We have a commitment to deliver 100 new homes in our first four years as a Housing Association and we are progressing well to achieve this target. 33 new homes have been completed in Phase 1; Phase 2 will deliver 43 new homes by late 2018 and a further 31 new homes built in 2019 through Phase 3. We have secured or are in contract negotiations to build 111 new homes under Section 106 agreements around the City's boundary over the next three years and we are currently awaiting the outcomes of bids to deliver a further 157 new homes by 2023.

Our Asset Management Strategy allows us to make informed choices on future investment through a comprehensive independent stock condition survey undertaken in 2015 and is updated annually. Over the next 5 years we will be delivering a capital investment programme of £36 million in our tenants' homes across the city, with a further £10.3 million in repairs and maintenance over the same period. We are committed to delivering safe, secure and decent homes that fulfill our health and safety requirements and this is always our top priority.

Around 1,600 of our tenants' homes are non-traditional (non-brick construction), built between the late 1940's to the 1970's, many of which are in the Matson and Podsmead communities. Working with Government, we secured £1.249 million in March 2017 to develop estate renewal plans for both communities and we are consulting closely with our residents and key partners to develop these plans by September 2018. The aim will be to secure significant funding streams through a phased renewal programme over the next 15 years. We are mindful of the potential that regeneration can bring to other parts of the

communities we serve and will seek to develop plans when we are able to.

In terms of current Government Policy, we welcome the Government's removal of their Rent Reduction scheme from 2020 and are pleased with their announcement to scrap plans for the proposed rent cap for older people; and the under 35's. We are also pleased that the Government has sought to address some of the sector's concerns around universal credit however we are unsure if the changes will provide the support needed to our more vulnerable tenants to prevent the buildup of rent arrears. Like most in the sector, we are concerned about the impact that universal credit may have on future rent arrears that may impact on our financial strength and therefore on tenant services and new homes delivery. We have put safeguards in place and are working hard with a range of partners including strong support from the local DWP team to ensure a successful transition from February 2018. We will continue to monitor the impacts on our financial business plan.

Our Board is tasked with safeguarding our social purpose and ensuring that the highest standards of governance and financial probity are maintained. We balance competing priorities by harnessing our available resources in a way that best delivers our mission. In 2017-2018, the Board strengthened its expertise, experience and capacity through a number of independent appointments from within the sector including housing and financial specialists that will ensure we remain on track and meet our tenant's priorities and needs. We are proud of the work our Tenant Panel undertakes and will be looking to strengthen their resources in 2018 and everyone at GCH is delighted that we maintained our strong Governance (G1) and Viability (V2) ratings from the Social Housing Regulator in November 2017.

Our turnover is around £20 million and we receive income from rents totaling £18.2 million. Some of our costs are high in comparison with our peers and we need to improve the views and perceptions our tenants have of us in some areas of our services.

GCH has 5 strategic objectives that support and outline our direction of travel over the next 5 years and beyond. These are clear, transparent and measurable:

1. Protect income levels and scrutinise our costs to maintain our financial strength, providing value for money services that support our social objectives
2. Build new homes, invest in our properties and regenerate our communities
3. Provide services that are valued by our tenants and support safer, greener and sustainable communities
4. Provide strong governance and collaborative leadership
5. Be an employer of choice

Under each strategic objective, we have identified a set of action plans to transform our approach to service delivery including:

- Introducing new technologies and systems to improve access to tenant services making it easier to access information, order on-line services and provide responsive feedback channels; supported by an empowered, more flexible and agile workforce.
- Building new homes through a range of housing products whilst extending our development operations within Gloucestershire to meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- Systematically reviewing and managing our assets intelligently so that innovative solutions are found to make them attractive, warm, energy efficient and flexible whilst meeting the decent homes standard and health and safety requirements.
- Developing regeneration proposals for Matson and Podsmead in consultation with our tenants and key partners.

- Challenging our services and reduce our costs particularly where we are above the benchmark and there is no good reason why.
- Introducing new commercial activities to generate income streams to support our core services for tenants.
- Improving our relationships with tenants to better understand their service needs and priorities.
- Developing our employees so that they can adapt and be flexible to the changing needs of our organisation.

Commit-28 outlines a 10 year vision of where we see ourselves in 2028 as an organisation that supports our tenants by:

“Primarily regenerating our two largest estates supporting social mobility, improved life chances and increased employment opportunities; maintaining a high level of investment in all of our homes across our communities to ensure they are both decent, energy efficient and low cost to maintain and manage.

Delivering a range of new housing products that use sensor technology to diagnose repairs, utilising green technology and providing flexibility in home design where rooms can change and be sized up or down to adapt to changing needs.

Utilising technology, we will provide flexible, pro-active services that provide choice, are easy to access anytime, anywhere supported by teams that can make responsive decisions enabled by technology in a flexible working environment”

We are proud of our employees and teams who deliver a range of services supported by a number of agencies and strategic partners who add value to what we provide. Our teams are placed in positions that can save lives, improve life chances and provide essential community support in sometimes challenging circumstances. We are delighted to be an Investor in People Gold organisation; and for the third time running achieving the Sunday Times Top 100 status for non-profit making organisations in 2018.

We have the opportunity to improve the lives and homes of many of our residents over the coming years, supported by a range of partners who can bring the necessary expertise and investment into Gloucester.



Asif Bhatti, Chair of the GCH Board



Ashley Green, Chief Executive