

Transforming our Future Strategy
2019 - 2022



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Introduction

We were created in 2007 and are a locally based Housing Association in and around Northamptonshire with a commitment to:

- Develop a diverse range of new homes to meet local needs
- Work with our customers to provide **great** homes and Value for Money services
- Invest in communities where it supports our customers and protects our business

Our mission

We will work successfully with our customers and communities to provide **great** services and high quality living environments.

Our values



Respect

We will treat each other and anyone who deals with us with respect and recognise everyone as an individual.



Trust

We will be open and honest with our colleagues, customers and external partners and we will deliver on the commitments that we make.



One Team

We will be one team, working collaboratively, listening and communicating clearly with our customers, to deliver **great** services.



Empowered

We will be bold, progressive, seek to empower our customers and be confident in the decisions we make.



Efficient and Effective

We will work efficiently and effectively, continuously looking for ways to improve and deliver Value for Money.



Executive summary

The Transforming our Future Strategy is one of four which underpin the new Corporate Plan for 2019 - 2022 and builds upon the key achievements delivered through our previous Organisational Development, Tenancy Management and Customer and Community Investment strategies (2015 - 2019).

The overarching purpose of this strategy is **'to make best use of modern technology to help change the way we work to deliver great Value for Money services to our customers'**.

We will do this by:

1. Embedding our Customer Charter to support new ways of working.
2. Providing strong and transformational leadership to support the changes we need to make including more agile working.

3. Using what we know about our customers to deliver tailored services to those who need them.
4. Promoting and increasing take up of online services for most day to day transactions with our customers - for example paying rent and reporting repairs.
5. Listening to what our customers and staff have to say when shaping new ways of working.

We will deliver this strategy through annual action plans that will be aligned to our corporate priorities and be flexible enough to respond to internal and external changes.



Context

Internal Context

We are a financially strong, well-managed and ambitious organisation.

Over the life of our Corporate Plan 2019 - 2022 we will continue to become more efficient and ensure that the provision of **great** customer service remains one of our priorities.

This strategy will support the changes required in how the organisation operates. This will be achieved through making changes to our processes and our technology. We will take advantage of new and existing technologies to deliver sustainable change and improved services to our customers. This strategy will mirror many developments seen elsewhere across the public and private sector normally seen under the terms Smarter Working or Digital First. That is, to look at the way we work and to embrace the technological advancements that will help us to work and communicate more efficiently and effectively.

However, the objectives of this strategy are much more than using the latest gadgets, rather they will require a change in culture

encouraging us to be more responsive to our customers, more collaborative with each other, consider innovation rather than repetition and be more flexible in the way we work.

There are many factors driving the need for transformation:

Our Customers

As services in the private sector evolve, the expectations of customers change alongside them. Many customers expect self-service options as the norm complete with 24 hour access and service options (such as delivery) that work around their busy lives.

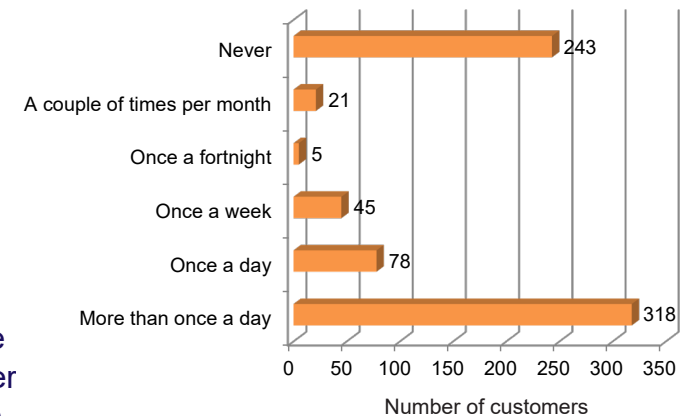
Registered Providers have some way to go to ensure that our offers match those that are already in existence. Whilst the need for our services to change to drive efficiency is important, it must not be the only driver. Our customer base is diverse and changing as the population ages and therefore our service offer and channels of delivery must be diverse also.

This means that whilst online will be our preferred way of working with customers, we

will still offer other ways where it is appropriate to do so, ensuring everyone has a way of accessing our services.

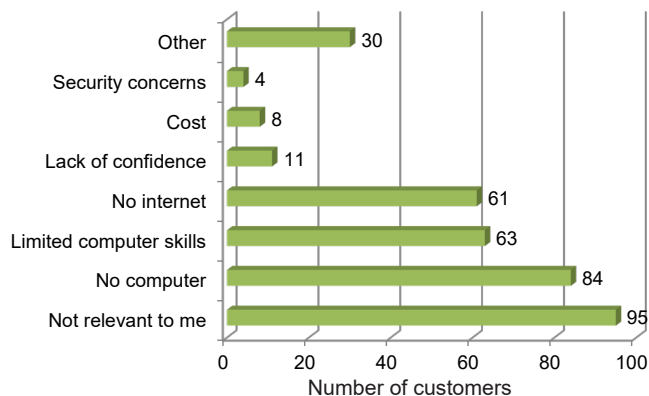
The 2018 survey of tenants and residents (STAR) revealed that 243 (34%) of our customers never use the internet.

Table one - Our customer internet usage



The primary reason for not using the internet was the perception that it was not relevant (39%). Other significant reasons for non-access included not having a computer, a lack of internet and limited computer skills as shown in the table below.

Table two - Reasons for customers not using the internet



Over the life of this strategy we will ensure our service offers and channels evolve to enable our customers to access our online services, with the right amount of training and support from staff. In terms of ‘channel shift’ this approach aligns more to providing channels of choice and ‘nudging’ customers towards our preferred options.

Our Customer Charter

Throughout 2018 we worked with our customers to design our Customer Charter which launched in April 2019. We created our

set of customer commitments, based on the regulatory standards.

The Customer Charter is critical to the delivery of each of our strategies and their outcomes. There are four distinct sections of the Customer Charter. The table below shows the sections which are relevant to this strategy.

| | |
|--|---|
| Great homes | We will build new homes to a great design. |
| | We will make sure we review and make best use of our properties in a way that supports you and us. |
| Great Value for Money services | We will make it as easy as possible to access our services online and this will be our preferred way of working with you. |
| | We will be visible and available in your neighbourhood. |
| | We will work to understand you better to provide a more effective service. |
| High quality living environments | We will ensure the way we manage your neighbourhood will be visible. |
| Working with our customers and communities | We will offer advice and support on money matters, employment and getting online. |
| | We will support you, where possible, to live independently. |
| | We will always listen to you and provide a variety of ways for you to shape and influence services. |

To underpin this, it is vital that a **great** customer experience is seen as everyone’s role within the organisation, customer service is everyone’s job and all conversations matter. This ensures that we are not only listening to customers and learning but everyone within the organisation understands how their role feeds into the delivery of our Customer Charter.

Our Employees

We have continued to grow over the last four years as we have brought our repairs and voids services ‘in house’ increasing employee numbers by over 20%. This has meant we have more control to improve the service our customers receive, but as an organisation it has meant we have had to consider how we engage with a more remote and agile workforce.

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) paper “Going Digital” recognises that many housing associations are keen to promote more flexible working arrangements for staff and they see digital technology as offering a good opportunity to do this.

The idea that “work is not where you go, it is what you do” is becoming a more accepted approach to managing people.



We are already working on supporting a workforce that has the ability to be more flexible and mobile with the opportunity to work away from the office. This includes introducing laptops and tablets for all roles and the launch of a paperless Human Resources (HR) system. This strategy will continue to deliver change to ensure we are efficient and effective in the services we provide.

The Chartered Institute of Housing found that an organisation's culture and its leadership role have a strong influence on how plans for digital transformation are agreed and acted upon. We currently carry out an annual employee survey which provides information on staff engagement. Recent results highlight that technology has been a key factor in increasing satisfaction, with the way information is shared throughout the organisation. It also highlights that there is a need to build on our management and leadership skills to meet the changing demands within the internal and external environment.

Training is an effective way to engage employees in developing a culture to support any transformation aims. The way change is communicated and how much they are involved in making changes can also help with achieving this. With the roll out of a transformational leadership programme and involving employees in shaping our

organisation we aim to see an increase of overall engagement across our organisation. As we grow there is increasing challenge to ensure we recruit the right skills and develop our own talent pools. Research has shown there is a shortage of key skills across sectors that impact us. The Federation of Master Builders in 2018 reported that a shortage of construction workers has reached its worst levels on record and that demand for key roles in trades is outstripping supply. Since April 2017 we have been required to pay into the Government Apprenticeship Levy which provides an opportunity to support apprentices from our local community. As we grow, it is essential that this strategy supports not only developing our own employees, but that we support employment in the local area.

National context

As housing continues to grow as an important area of national policy debate, the sector's prominence has grown.

The customer voice has featured in the Government's Green Paper, 'A New Deal for Social Housing' which has discussed how the Regulator might be further empowered with regards to the consumer standards and strengthen the customer voice through more effective and streamlined responses to complaints. The way in which services are delivered is changing at a rapid pace. Services provided by the Government are

being adapted to become 'digital by default' (including everything from claiming benefits to taxing a vehicle). As an organisation which prides itself on **great** customer services, we need to ensure our customers are best equipped to manage these changes as a failure to do so will have significant consequences for us and them.

The world of work is changing, with many employers focusing on work/life balance and the well-being of employees as a driver of **great** customer experiences. Employers are gradually moving away from presentism in office locations towards flexible working patterns and locations.

In order to be seen as an employer of choice, we need to ensure that our offer to our employees is comparable with other leading providers in terms of pay, recognition, sense of mission, ethics and flexibility.

The drive for efficiency whilst evidencing Value for Money continues to drive activity in the sector. For many, this instinctively leads towards a reduction in face to face transactions, office locations and other personal contacts in favour of more automated methods. As mentioned previously, landlords with a diverse customer base will need to ensure that service changes are considered in consultation with customers and staff to ensure they are successful.



Key achievements over the past four years

Although this strategy is a relatively new area of work, it brings together a number of work streams captured by our previous Organisational Development, Tenancy Management and Customer & Community Investment strategies.

The key achievements of these three strategies are listed below:

- Improved our arrears collection (3.6% to 3.0%) arrears and our void times (from 36.5 days to 25.5 days) in 2017/18.
- Introduced any day direct debits to allow more flexibility for our customers.
- Strengthened our approach to identifying tenancy fraud.
- Introduced additional software which has helped manage the impact of welfare reform.
- Developed a training academy to enhance customers' training needs and employability prospects.
- Reviewed our Supported Living service and re-branded as Independent Living with a focus on maintaining health and well-being for our customers.
- Developed our values with employees and introduced and embedded our Values and Behaviours Framework supporting our approach across the whole organisation.
- Launched our customer portal giving customers flexible access to their account information.
- Worked with the community through a number of initiatives and embedded a Giving Something Back legacy across the organisation.
- Launched a bespoke recruitment portal to attract applicants who align with our values and have the right skills to deliver a **great** service.
- Retained the highest regulatory judgement, G1/V1, from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).



Purpose & objectives

The Transforming our Future Strategy is one of four strategies which underpin the Corporate Plan 2019 - 2022 and builds upon the key achievements delivered through our previous Organisational Development, Tenancy Management and Customer and Community Investment strategies (2015 - 19)

The overarching purpose of this strategy is 'to make best use of modern technology to help change the way we work to deliver **great** Value for Money services to our customers'.

- 1 Embedding our Customer Charter to support new ways of working.**
- 2 Providing strong and transformational leadership to support the changes we need to make including more agile working.**
- 3 Using 'what we know' about our customers to deliver tailored services to those who need them.**
- 4 Promoting and increasing take up of online services for most day to day transactions with our customers - for example, paying rent and/or reporting repairs.**
- 5 Listening to what our customers and staff have to say when shaping new ways of working.**



Outcomes

The key outcomes we expect from delivering this strategy for our employees and customers are summarised below.

| Customers | Working together | Employees |
|--|--|--|
| Increased customer satisfaction. | Customers and employees from across the business shape service delivery. | Increased employee engagement. |
| Customers help us to design services that meet their needs. | Improved Value for Money with demonstrable efficiency savings. | Employees and Board Members have the tools and systems they require to work in a flexible way. |
| Customers are able to engage with us at any time. | Services are more agile and responsive to changing external demands. | Managers encourage, inspire and motivate employees to innovate and create change that help grow and shape the success of the organisation. |
| We are more visible in our communities, and divert resources to those that most need them. | Data and evidence supports decision-making throughout the organisation. | That apprentices form part of our plan of growing our business and we are providing more jobs within the local economy. |
| We use what we know about our customers to ensure we deliver a tailored and effective service. | Increased number of customers making use of the customer portal. | We are able to attract and retain employees that live our values. |
| | We are utilising digital tools to support the management of our assets. | |



Delivering the strategy

The objectives below will be supported by a three year action plan. All strategy objectives will support cross cutting action plans.

| Objective | What we will do |
|--|---|
| Embed our Customer Charter to support delivery of new ways of working | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all service developments complement the Customer Charter. • Develop measures to ensure the Customer Charter is applied consistently across our organisation. • Ensure the Customer Charter is recognised and understood by all of our employees. |
| Provide strong and transformational leadership to support the changes we need to make including more agile working | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a cultural survey to understand areas of strength and development and implement actions to deliver cultural change and create metrics to measure its success. • Develop and deliver a training programme to develop transformational leadership to support a more agile workforce. • Ensure that we offer a competitive yet attractive package that supports engagement, high performance and retention. • Maximising the usage of the HR system to ensure a more efficient and effective service. • Embed job shadowing opportunities internally to ensure a one team approach to delivering great customer service. Expanding this to a greater variety of staff being accessible to our involved customers. |
| Use 'what we know' about our customers to deliver tailored services to those who need them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) 'trailblazer' project to ensure customer voice and influence is maximised by use of behavioural insights. • Ensure relevant customer data is collected and kept up to date, in line with our data protection policy. • Understand the barriers to tenancy sustainment. • Deliver a 'risk based' approach to ensure customers most at risk of tenancy failure have the appropriate support. • Consider revised repairs timeslots to meet different customer needs - linked to online booking. • Understand our customers who are not digitally active and look at ways of engaging them, ensuring our services are accessible to them. |



| Objective | What we will do |
|---|---|
| <p>Promote and increase take up of online services for most day to day transactions with our customers - for example, paying rent and reporting repairs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce and promote new platforms for customers/staff (i.e. customer portal/mobile working). • Employ 'nudge theory' to influence behaviour. • Ensure our IT infrastructure enables staff to work remotely and be more visible to customers. |
| <p>Listen to what our customers and employees have to say when shaping new ways of working</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement an employee forum that enables them to shape the way of working. • Ensure an appropriate feedback mechanism is in place aligned with our Corporate Plan Customer Involvement Framework for customer feedback. • Design the right measures to understand and review the customer experience. • Support the local economy as an employer, including through apprenticeship opportunities. • Review and implement smarter ways of gaining customer feedback. • Ensure smarter use of communication platforms based on customer feedback. • Look at trends in complaints and concerns to identify service improvements and feedback to our customers. • Introduction of "you said, we did" communications for both customers and staff. |



Measuring success

In order to measure our successes in delivering this strategy we will use a combination of new and existing key and operational performance indicators (KPIs and OPIs).

The following table provides measures that will be adopted for the purpose of this strategy.

Targets will be set as part of the annual Corporate Planning cycle, and will be aligned to priorities, risks and strategic objectives. Individuals will have targets set as part of their annual appraisals which complement these targets.

A high level action plan sets out the key activities that will be progressed over the next three years aligned to the relevant objective. As part of the annual Corporate Planning cycle the action plan will be reviewed and updated to ensure that our plans can respond to any changes in the external operating environment and are aligned to our strategic objectives and wider corporate priorities.

| Measure | |
|----------------------------|---|
| VFM Metrics | % Reduction in transaction costs |
| | % Increase in 'online' transactions |
| KPIs & OPIs | % Repairs completed on first visit |
| | % Mystery shops rated 'good' or above |
| | % Follow up mystery shops rated 'good' or above |
| | Average days absence per employee |
| STAR Survey | % Customers satisfied that we listen to views and act on them |
| | % Customers satisfied with opportunities to become involved |
| | % Customers satisfied with services provided by us |
| Employee Measures | Employee that feel empowered in their role |
| | % Voluntary turnover |
| | Employees feel they have everything they require to deliver in their role |
| | % Managers completing management training |
| | Employees feel they have a good relationship with their manager |
| Customer Experience | % Customers satisfied with ease of online processes |



Monitoring the framework

References

There is a clear process in place for identifying, assessing and monitoring risks including providing assurance and overall compliance. Full details can be found in our Risk and Assurance Framework.

In order to ensure our objectives are met we will review this strategy on an annual basis and report the outcomes of the review to the Executive Management Team (EMT) and to Board as part of a Corporate Plan update.

In addition, the delivery of this strategy against internal action plans will be presented to the following groups:

- Transforming our Future Programme Board
- Corporate Programme Board
- Customer Assembly

| | |
|---|---|
| Corporate Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy is one of four which underpin the Corporate Plan 2019 - 2022. |
| Growth Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy will support the Growth Strategy aim of growing our business through the expansion of our Customer Charter, providing more jobs and supporting the local economy. |
| Finance Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy will support the objectives in the Finance Strategy. |
| Asset Management Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy will support the consideration of digital tools and initiatives to improve the management of our assets. |
| Value for Money and Procurement Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In delivering this strategy we will ensure that all contracts are procured efficiently via our online platform. • We will ensure that we are able to divert our resources to those who require them the most, thereby delivering Value for Money. |
| Risk, Assurance and Compliance Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key risks and mitigations associated with the delivery of this strategy are reflected in the strategic risk and assurance map which is reviewed by ARC and the Board on a quarterly basis. |
| Communications Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will promote the actions linked to this strategy through an effective communications plan, ensuring the message is accessible and relevant to its target audience. |
| Customer Involvement Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We consulted the CA on the objectives and proposals set out in this strategy in December 2018 and the associated actions in January 2019. • Where service development/implementation proposals directly affect our customers we will actively seek and listen to their views and fully involve them in the design process. |
| Equality Implications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and taken into consideration when developing the action plan in delivering this strategy. It shows the impact on a number of groups with protected characteristics including people with disabilities and different ages can be positive. |





E: customer.services@greatwellhomes.org.uk
T: 01933 234450

Twitter: @greatwellhomes

Facebook: www.facebook.com/greatwellhomes/

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/company/greatwell-homes/

**12 Sheep Street
Wellingborough
Northamptonshire
NN8 1BL**

