



FORWARD TOGETHER

OUR CORPORATE PLAN
2023-26



CHAIR'S FOREWORD

Welcome to Forward Together, Riverside's Corporate Plan 2023-26.

In 'Forward Together' we set out our three-year strategy, the first we have published since our 2021 merger with One Housing. Putting this plan together has presented the perfect opportunity to engage in a grown up and healthy debate where we have considered our challenges, opportunities and key priorities as a larger Group with a national footprint; one that I am delighted to say has resulted in us reaffirming our commitment to our social purpose and values as one of the country's leading charitable housing associations.

We have been going through this process of reflection at a time of huge risk for the sector. Emerging from the pandemic, our customers are facing a once in a generation cost of living crisis, just as the business too is trying to cope with rapidly escalating costs and constrained income, reducing

our capacity to do as much as we would want to do. Never before has the need for focus and effective prioritisation been so critical.

At the same time, it is more important than ever to focus on quality – both of our existing homes and our relationship with customers. Indeed parts of the sector stand accused of underestimating the poor condition of their stock and letting residents down. Whilst unsafe tall buildings, and more recently, damp and mould have been central to this debate, there has been less recognition of the unsuitability of some of the nation's oldest homes, particularly as we strive to decarbonise our stock – some of the very homes left untouched when the last concerted effort at a national regeneration strategy ground to a halt over a decade ago. We are not immune from these challenges, and housing quality and repairs

have been central to many of the debates we have had with customers and colleagues, as reflected in the objectives we set out in the plan. That is not to say that building new homes is no longer seen as important – there is still a very visible housing, homelessness and affordability crisis that urgently needs tackling. It is more that we need to ensure we use our resources to achieve a balance of outcomes for current and future customers.

Despite current constraints, putting a plan of this nature together leads us to take the long view. I believe that through the merger we have a more resilient and ambitious organisation, one that will ultimately be able to unlock capacity that neither organisation could have done alone. Capacity to provide better quality homes that meet zero carbon, capacity to provide the best services for our customers,

and capacity to build more. But to realise that capacity, we have an immediate job to do as we bring the two organisations together – an integration process that will last throughout this plan period. I hope this document clearly articulates how we will navigate these competing pressures, balancing the urge to hunker down and regroup, with a clear-sighted ambition to do more and better for our customers and communities.



Terrie Alafat CBE
Group Chair





**PART 1:
INTRODUCTION**

ABOUT THIS PLAN

This plan sets out the strategic priorities for The Riverside Group (Riverside) over the period 2023-26.

Developed in consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders, the plan is founded on a firm commitment to deliver a series of pledges made as part of the merger with One Housing Group (referred to as One Housing in this document) to provide better homes, services and outcomes for our customers. It also draws from an extensive review of our internal and external operating environments, our performance over the previous three-years, and our changed characteristics as a larger organisation with a greater presence in London

As a newly merged Group, the period to 2026 will require an unwavering focus on achieving full integration, as we bring together colleagues, functions, services and systems, at the same time as developing a collaborative culture based on our new, shared values. This comes at a time of stronger regulation across our sector, with an increased emphasis on consumer regulation through a refocussed Regulator of Social Housing and more muscular Housing Ombudsman, a new regime for building safety, and the strengthening of the CQC and Ofsted regimes applying to some of our care and support services. Integration in this context will be a significant undertaking and is a key theme underpinning this plan, requiring time, resource

and strong leadership in an already challenging environment. But we must not let it distract or indeed prevent us from delivering better outcomes for our customers, the very reason for us coming together in the first place.

As we continue to navigate one of the most challenging periods in our history, which has been dominated by the pandemic and succession of disruptive lockdowns, there is still much to do to complete what we started in the last corporate planning period. Indeed, it became evident very early on that the immediate challenges we faced would severely impact our ability to meet many of our targets, as we responded to the pandemic and grappled with rising costs and supply chain issues leading into the cost-of-living crisis that we find ourselves in now. Some of our key achievements under the last plan are set out on page 10.

Because of this and given the long-term nature of many of our activities, there is a strong thread of continuity with the last plan. Although our objectives have been re-shaped in response to the challenges facing us now, the plan does not represent a major departure in terms of our overall strategic direction of travel.



HOW THE PLAN IS STRUCTURED

The plan is set out in two parts:

Part 1 sets the scene and explains the evidence base that is driving our strategy.

Part 2 articulates, at a high-level, the actions and the outcomes we want to achieve under each of five objectives against which we will monitor our progress and performance. This represents the core of the plan.

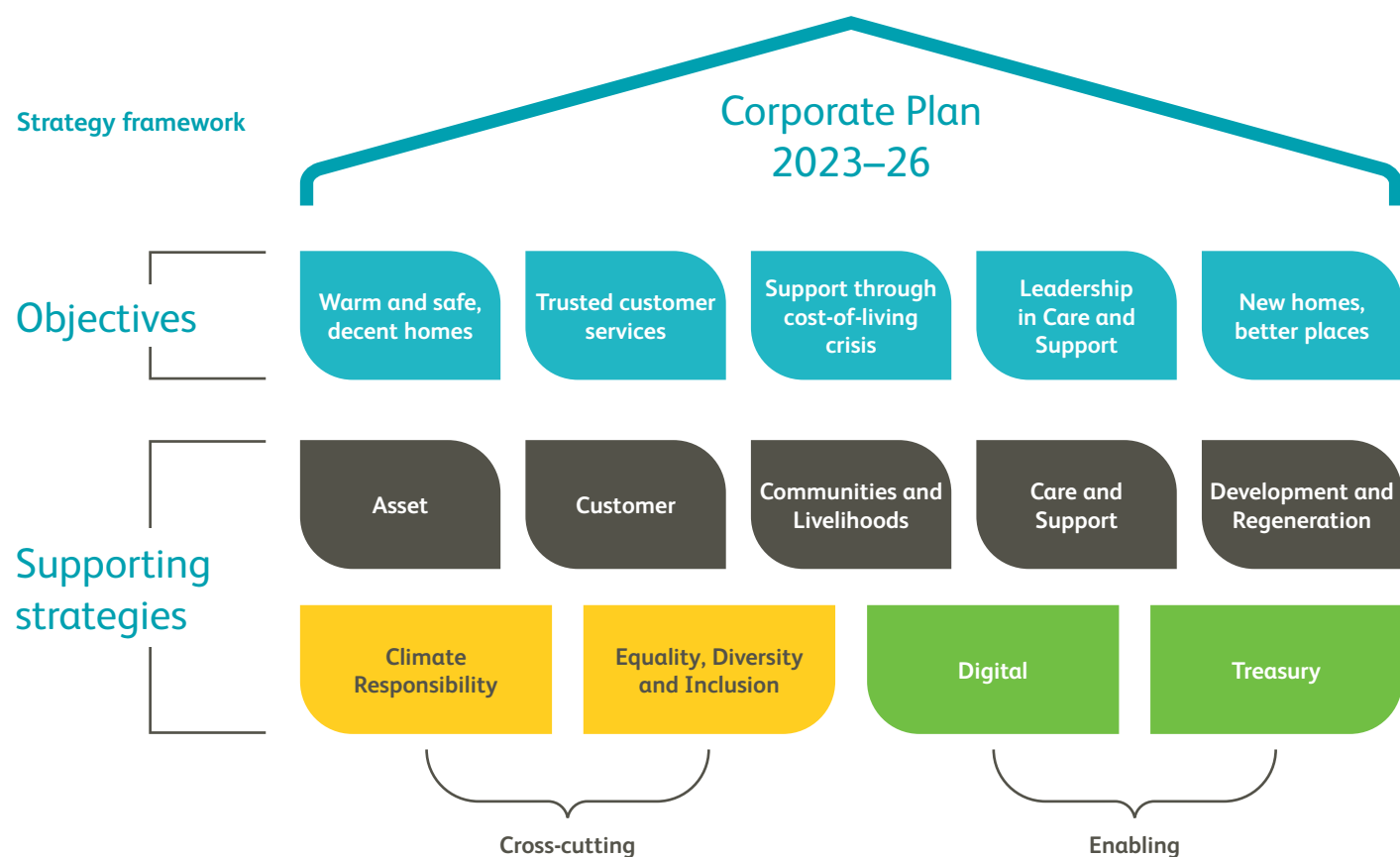
The objectives are:

- Warm and safe, decent homes
- Trusted customer services
- Support through the cost-of-living crisis
- Leadership in Care and Support
- New homes, better places

The plan is also underpinned by four cross-cutting themes, explained in more detail on page 53. These are:

- Value for money
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- People
- Data and information

The plan acts as the starting point for all activity across the Group and is accompanied by nine supporting strategies (as below) that unpack the detail and will drive delivery over the next three years. We set out how the plan will be delivered on page 54.



Although for the purposes of monitoring and reporting the outcomes identified are time-bound in accordance with the scope of this document, the reality is that much of the action we take now will extend far beyond 2026, reflecting our long-standing commitment to transforming lives and

revitalising neighbourhoods. A brief assessment of the longer-term outlook is included for each of the objectives to ensure that we do not lose focus on the challenges to come.



OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS WE HAVE:

Worked with customers to **enhance our digital offer** that now includes a dedicated app, chatbot and live webchat facility that will enable us to resolve queries more quickly and effectively.

Established the Group’s first **‘Climate Responsibility’ strategy**, setting out the steps we will take as part of a long-term commitment to play our role in tackling climate change through reducing carbon emissions associated with our housing stock and operations.

Grown as one of the **leading providers of care and support services**, with more than 12,000 units of accommodation for people with a wide range of needs.

Achieved the Gold Award under the **Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme** and helped to shape the national Veterans’ Strategy.

Grown our portfolio to more than 76,000 homes following the **successful merger with One Housing**, in order to deliver tangible benefits to customers and stakeholders through greater levels of stock investment, improved services and new homes.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PREVIOUS CORPORATE PLAN PERIOD (2020-23)

Developed **c2,800 homes across a range of tenures**, the vast majority of which are affordable (c80%).

Totally re-shaped the ways in which we work, with a successful transition to a flexible **Smart Working** model based on the key pillars of collaboration, communication, community and connecting.

Progressed **major regeneration** plans in London, where we have secured resident support to deliver c1,000 multi-tenure replacement and new homes over the next ten years across a number of sites, and Runcorn, where plans are in place to deliver over 400 homes as part of a wider long-term neighbourhood renewal initiative.

Continued to develop our sector voice both through our own campaigning, and working collaboratively through **Homes for the North and G15**. We have helped secure changes to the way in which Government distributes housing infrastructure funding between regions, and additional revenue funding to tackle veterans’ homelessness.

ABOUT RIVERSIDE

The Riverside Group is one of the largest and most experienced housing association groups in the country, with national coverage and roots dating back to the early 20th century.



A diverse Group with a charitable housing association at the centre

At the heart of the Group is a not-for-profit charitable housing association, The Riverside Group Ltd (Riverside) – a Private Registered Provider of Social Housing registered with the Regulator of Social Housing. The Group has a separately regulated housing association subsidiary operating in Scotland, and commercial subsidiaries which build new homes for sale and provide maintenance services. We have entered a number of joint ventures to deliver large scale development and regeneration schemes. A simplified structure chart can be found [here](#).

Well run by an experienced non-executive Board with significant customer influence

Riverside is led by a skilled Group Board comprising 11 non-executive members and the Chief Executive. Customers play a vital role in our governance, and we provide opportunities for them to engage at every level of the organisation, with a member and an observer on Group Board, as well as customers on all of our key service committees. There is a range of other ways customers help shape our priorities, through formal engagement structures such as Riverside Customer Voice, four Resident Panels in London, scrutiny panels and digital engagement through our burgeoning iCommunity. Customers have played a central role in the development of this plan and associated strategies, as well as providing oversight to the recent merger.

An organisation with a clear social purpose: *“We create places for people to call home and support them to live well”*

Our purpose is to provide a range of homes and services for those who cannot meet their housing needs through the market, because of their incomes or other barriers associated with age, homelessness, disability or health. We are not just a ‘bricks and mortar’ organisation, and have adopted a wider vision where we seek to support the livelihoods of our customers and the communities they live in. This is reflected in our branding where we remain committed to our long-standing strapline: **Transforming lives, revitalising neighbourhoods**. We are also a campaigning organisation, working through our networks to bring about positive change to national policy.

And a strong set of values
We care
We are inclusive
We are trusted

To fulfil our social purpose, we have adopted a set of values which flow through the organisation and influence the way we behave. Our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion is central to this and we have recently reviewed our organisational values to make this more explicit.

Offering a range of homes and services for a diverse group of customers

Around seven in 10 of our homes are let at either social or affordable rents. However we also have a significant low-cost home ownership offer – predominantly shared ownership – and build homes for outright sale to help people get on the housing ladder, with profits gift-aided back to the charity. We are an active developer on new homes, building around 2,800 homes over our last three-year Corporate Plan period. We provide property management services to leaseholders who own their apartments.

Care and support fundamental to the way we see ourselves

We are now one of the country’s largest providers of supported housing, providing support services to client groups ranging from those who are homeless – often with multiple complex needs – through to older customers requiring ‘extra care’. This is a commitment we will retain. We also offer additional services to support livelihoods and sustain tenancies across all customer groups as they face an unprecedented cost of living crisis. This includes financial support by way of small grants, money and affordable warmth advice, and help for tenants seeking employment. In this way our work to tackle homelessness is truly cross-cutting.

Going through a period of profound change

One Housing joined The Riverside Group as a subsidiary in December 2021, fulfilling a growth objective set in our previous Corporate Plan. It legally integrated with The Riverside Group Ltd in March 2023 through a transfer of engagements. Coming together with a London-based organisation with over 16,000 homes has had a significant impact on the size and shape of the Group (see box opposite).



HOW WE HAVE CHANGED

- Increased size and spread, with the Group now owning and managing over 75,000 homes in 174 local authority areas, although 70% are in just 17. We operate in every English region and South-West Scotland.
- A slight tilt in the balance of the tenure our homes, with proportionately fewer homes for general needs social housing, and more in other tenures including low-cost home ownership.
- A change in the profile of the type of homes we own, with a shift towards smaller, newer homes in apartment blocks, of which 82 are part of a cladding remediation programme.
- A significant change in the overall profile of our customers, with Riverside now having younger, more ethnically diverse customer base, and a higher proportion of tenants receiving benefits to support rent payments.
- Changes to the overall characteristics of our neighbourhoods. Whilst over a third of homes are in the country’s 10% most deprived neighbourhoods, on average the areas in which we work are slightly more prosperous.

Further information can be found here:

- [State of the Group report](#)
- [Riverside Scotland profile](#)

OUR OPERATING CONTEXT

It is not unusual for housing associations to face challenges relating to economic, market and political instability. However, the backdrop to the development of this Corporate Plan feels unique, in that we are facing simultaneous risks at scale across a full range of policy areas.

As part of our preparation work, we have undertaken a full analysis of our operating context which can be found [here](#). The pace of change has been bewildering, and the document has had to be updated continuously, however at the start of our new plan the following issues feel the most pertinent:

- The events of the past few years have provided shock after shock to not only the UK, but the global economy. Just as the country's recovery from Covid meant that the economy had finally grown beyond its pre-pandemic size, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 resulted in massive disruption to global energy, food and commodity supply chains sending prices spiralling and cutting off the prospect of sustained growth. The UK is now on the brink of a recession, which may have only been postponed by a pre-Christmas mini-boom in consumer spending. In the longer-term, many economists are projecting a permanent loss of growth as a result of trade barriers created by the country's exit from the EU.
- With inflation (CPI) peaking at 11.1% in October 2022 – the highest level for 41 years – costs for all businesses have spiralled, now compounded by increasing interest rates in the wake of fiscal mismanagement by the short-lived Truss Government. For housing providers, many building costs are increasing at an even higher rate, resulting in the real prospect of doing less for more. And whilst Government financial management now seems to be back under some sort of control, this will come at the price of significant cuts to departmental spending with very little room for manoeuvre for new spending programmes.
- High inflation and limited pay settlements mean real wages are falling, with TUC analysis suggesting that on average wages fell by £76 per month during 2022, the sharpest rate since records began in 2001. This has triggered a wave of industrial unrest bringing large parts of the transport network to a halt and piling additional pressure on an NHS struggling to recover from the pandemic. In turn many keyworkers have simply left the workforce or opted for better paid roles in sectors such as retail, leading to a recruitment crisis in social care, construction, customer service roles and large parts of the health service – many of the areas where Riverside is actively hiring.
- The impact on our customers has been even more profound, as the country faces a cost-of-living crisis which disproportionately affects those on the lowest incomes. For the poorest, many are facing destitution as they chose whether to 'heat or eat' let alone pay their rent. Riverside's own evidence suggests that over the past year just under two thirds of customers have worried about paying household bills and expenses all or most of the time, with a third saying they will not be able to cope with the crisis. This winter's unprecedented package of support for domestic energy bills and the prospect of an inflation linked rise in benefits in April 2023 will obviously help, however previous welfare reforms – such as the bedroom tax and limits to the Local Housing Allowance – mean that for many, benefits still fall significantly short of the cost of housing. Also, the ability of any Government to sustain this level of individual household support is highly questionable, and the energy price cap is already scheduled to increase in April 2023.

- Historically high house prices and rents in the private sector have led to an affordability crisis, partly the product of new home completions falling well short of the annual 300,000 target set out in the 2019 Conservative manifesto – with completions 25 % lower in 2021/2. In the face of backbench pressure, the Government appears to be watering down the status of this target and undermining its own planning reforms at a time when the housing market is showing signs of slowing anyway, with house price growth projected to fall by up to 10 % in 2023 and 2024. The ability of hard-pressed housing associations – already struggling with their own stock condition pressures arising from the ongoing focus on building safety and net zero – to play a traditional counter-cyclical role is in real doubt and following a Government decision to cap rents at well below inflation, many are seriously questioning the scale of their development activities going forward.
- This aligns with a politically-led sea change in Government policy, for so long almost exclusively focussed on maximising housing supply. There is now an unrelenting focus on housing quality in the wake of the building safety scandal which followed the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and then a succession of high-profile media and social media stories focussing on the prevalence of damp and mould in social housing, which has now led to significant interventions on the part of both the Regulator and Housing Ombudsman.
- With English legislation completing its passage through Parliament which will considerably stiffen consumer regulation, and the sector responding through its own ‘back to basics’ campaign emerging from the Better Social Housing Review, a fundamental reprioritisation towards the quality of existing stock feels inevitable. The reputation of the sector is arguably at its lowest ebb for many years.
- In the meantime, factors which have fuelled a housing and affordability crisis – demographic change, an ageing population with rising dependency ratios, rising street homelessness – have not gone away. The way providers navigate the space between housing quality, new provision and regeneration will define the difference between success and failure over the next few years.



Despite all of this, Riverside is in a better place to address these challenges than many providers, particularly given the long-term financial resilience the merger brings. The current landscape presents a number of opportunities for both Riverside and the sector more generally, and despite the uncomfortable narrative, at least housing is firmly on Government’s radar, along with a levelling up agenda designed to address regional inequalities. Social housing tenants are rightfully being given a greater say in their homes and living conditions and a new approach to building safety will hopefully ensure that no one is left living in a home with dangerous cladding.

But the outlook for housing is at best unstable over the period of the Corporate Plan. Even a year ago few would have predicted two changes of Prime Minister, a war in Europe and record-breaking inflation, and with the prospect of a General Election within the next two years, things are bound to change again. This means we will need to be flexible and fleet footed, reviewing our operating environment and plans on a continuous basis, and being prepared to change direction if necessary.

HOW WE’VE CREATED THE PLAN Consultation

This plan reflects the outcome of an extensive period of consultation with a wide-range of stakeholders, including board and committee members, subsidiaries, involved customers and colleagues across Riverside and One Housing. Through a co-ordinated approach carried out over a six-month period, more than 600 people contributed to a process that included facilitated online and in-person workshops, and an online opinion poll to gain insight into areas in which we should seek to prioritise action.

The purpose of the consultation exercise was to provide all members of our governance community, colleagues and involved customers the opportunity to help shape the overall focus and ultimately the objectives upon which this plan is based. To this end, engaging with people in this way proved to be invaluable in framing focused discussion at Executive and Board level towards the latter stages of plan’s development.

The key messages that emerged from the consultation process have directly influenced the content of the plan, including the need to:

- **Improve the condition of our existing homes** – driving better quality through targeted investment with concerted effort to tackle damp and mould.
- **Continue building affordable homes** – addressing the housing shortage through developing the right properties in the right areas.
- **Support people through the cost-of-living crisis** – doing what we can to help customers and colleagues.
- **Continue to tackle homelessness** – both through our specialist services and wider prevention work across all tenures.

A full summary of the consultation outcomes can be found:

- [Consultation Outcomes](#)
- [Consultation Outcomes Detail](#)



**PART 2:
OUR
OBJECTIVES**

OUR THREE-YEAR STRATEGY

The following five sections set out the detail of our Corporate Plan, one for each of our strategic priorities. These draw on the evidence we have gathered as we have developed the plan, presented in Part 1 of this document.

However before considering the detail, we want to set out the essence of our three-year strategy – our plan ‘in a nutshell’.

The next three years can best be characterised as a period of purposeful consolidation as we complete our integration following the single biggest growth step in the Group’s history. We want to ensure we reap the full benefits of this growth for current customers, as we continue to build a resilient business better able to serve future generations.

KEEPING OUR PROMISES

Our overriding priority is to keep the specific pledges we made to our customers when we merged with One Housing. This will be the measure of whether the significant expansion of the Group has been successful. The pledges are repeated opposite.

DECENT, QUALITY HOMES

We will have an unwavering focus on the quality of our homes and repairs service – both through our investment programmes and our regeneration activities, as we replace homes that are not fit for the future. Initially we will have two areas of focus, completing the replacement of unsafe cladding on our high buildings and eradicating damp and mould from our homes.

HIGH QUALITY SERVICES, DELIVERED LOCALLY

We will bring our operations together, with services designed to reflect a set of simple principles already agreed with our customers. As a national organisation we will deliver locally tailored services which are accessible and visible to our diverse customers and connected to other local stakeholders. Our customers have told us that this is one of their top priorities. We will continue to roll out a modern digital offer to deal with the majority of routine transactions.

LEADING PROVIDER OF SUPPORTED HOUSING

We will retain our position as one of the country’s best and largest providers of supported housing and housing for older people. But to do this we will streamline our approach, focussing on what we do best, in the places where we can make a difference.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF OUR ASSETS

Not all of our homes are sustainable in the long-term, either because of their age and construction, or because they are not in places where we are best placed to deliver services. We will shift our approach to disposals, from one driven by the short term tactical need to fund our building safety programme, to one that is strategic and evidence based.

BUILDING HOMES

We will continue to be a significant housebuilder to meet local needs, but at a smaller scale than originally planned – at least in the short-term. Our focus will change, as increasingly our programme prioritises the reprovion of existing homes in order to build better places through large scale regeneration. The homes we build will be more energy efficient and fit for the future.

INTEGRATING OUR BUSINESS

We will complete our business integration, putting the right governance structures in place and developing efficient and effective Group-wide central services and back-office systems. We are making strong progress, but this is a major undertaking which will require significant investment if we are to reap the long-term financial benefits of the merger.



OUR MERGER PLEDGES

- 1 We will deliver better services for customers, protecting rents and tenancy rights.
- 2 We will make sure that there is a louder customer voice, with residents able to take part in our Boards and committees, and better able to hold us to account.
- 3 We will invest nearly £1 billion in improving and repairing homes over the next five years, with a focus on fire and building safety, warmer homes and regeneration. We will also build more new affordable homes.
- 4 We will improve care and support services for older people, those with complex needs and people who are homeless.
- 5 We will improve the livelihoods of customers and build stronger communities, providing better opportunities by investing in employment support and money advice.
- 6 We will keep our promises and make sure you can hold us to account, publishing a report each year on how we are delivering these pledges.

If we are successful in delivering our strategy, we should expect to be able to demonstrate:

- **Governance excellence**, with a recognised capability to deal with financial risk and a toughening regulatory environment.
- **Improved financial performance**, building the long-term capacity which will enable us to reinvest in homes and services and ensure we continue to be attractive to funders and investors.

WARM AND SAFE, DECENT HOMES



We will deliver an extensive remediation programme to improve building safety, with targeted investment to increase the energy-efficiency of customers’ homes, tackling damp and mould and managing our portfolio through a strategic rationalisation plan.

As one of the largest national social housing landlords, effective management and maintenance of our homes is paramount. This never changes, but has perhaps never been so important, as public and political pressure to address poor social housing conditions continues to intensify in the wake of several high-profile events that have highlighted systemic failures to meet basic decency standards.

The scale of the challenge is huge, with providers already facing unprecedented costs to ensure the safety of residents through identifying and remediating buildings with potentially dangerous cladding, at the same time as decarbonising their homes. Both areas are significant for Riverside, particularly following our merger with One Housing which means we now own and/or manage 351 tall buildings (above 11m). As the pace at which social landlords begin to establish fully costed retrofit plans increases, so will the need for tough decisions to be made around the future of stock for which achieving net-zero carbon will simply not be possible.

There is also a need to be much more proactive in identifying and addressing damp and mould issues, including a fundamental re-think of the way customer concerns are treated in the aftermath of the shocking death of Awaab Ishak. Wider issues linked to inflation and rising materials and labour costs (and indeed shortages of both) are impacting the delivery of standard investment works, and the overall quality and integrity of housing stock condition data has been questioned in the recent Better Social Housing Review, with calls for a national audit of social housing.

Although the landscape has changed significantly since the launch of our previous Corporate Plan in 2020, as have our characteristics as a larger organisation, much of what we set out to deliver then is what we need to carry on with now, albeit with greater emphasis on building safety. We responded quickly to identify where cladding might be an issue and are well on the way with delivering a major £170m replacement programme. We are also taking steps to bring as many homes as possible up to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C by 2030, with a dedicated Head of Sustainability in post and comprehensive stock condition survey carried out. A full options appraisal of our larger supported housing schemes has also been undertaken and we have improved our approach to managing building safety. A four-year £12m project is underway to tackle damp and mould issues, with a key focus on identifying ‘at risk’ properties in addition to those for which problems are already being addressed.

Whilst progress over the past three years has taken us to a point, there is much more to do to improve the quality of our homes over the long-term, and this plan largely reflects natural next steps as an expanded Group, with the specific focus shaped by the current operating environment. The scale of our ambition and outcomes we are setting out to deliver over the next three years represent an honest assessment of what we can expect to achieve in these testing times, with our energy upgrade programme backloaded, with the bulk of a £70m programme of works due to be completed between 2026-30.

OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS WE WILL:



Remove potentially dangerous cladding from our tall buildings, complying with all fire and wider safety requirements across all properties.



Be proactive in addressing damp and mould issues, taking concerted action as part of a £12m project.



Bring more homes up to EPC C, continuing to grow capacity and securing funding to accelerate our decarbonisation programme post 2026.



Preserve the long-term viability of our homes, delivering an extensive investment programme and taking a strategic approach to rationalise our portfolio.

THIS IS HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES AND THE OUTCOMES WE’LL DELIVER¹

COMPLETE EXTENSIVE BUILDING SAFETY REMEDIATION WORKS

Complete pre-mobilisation work.

Preparatory work on all buildings complete, including resolution of legal issues involving original contractors, and all Building Safety Fund applications submitted.

Substantially complete £170m programme to remove potentially dangerous cladding from all ‘high-risk’ buildings.

Remediation works fully completed and/or EWS1 certified for the majority of 79 buildings included within the current scope of the programme that has reduced from 170. (WS1)

Remediation works in progress on all outstanding buildings.

Decisive action to meet enhanced regulatory standards for all other tall buildings.

130 tall buildings registered with Building Safety Regulator. (WS2)

More effective engagement structures in place with empowered residents having a greater say in how safety information is provided, accessed and understood as evidenced by increased customer satisfaction around building safety. (WS3)

All staff involved in the management of safety in residential buildings trained to PAS 8673 competency requirements.

¹ Ensuring that we deliver the highest possible standard of works through the course of our day-to-day repairs service is also crucial to improving the quality of our homes, but as a key driver of customer satisfaction, activity in this area is included within the ‘Trusted Customer Services’ section (p30).

PROACTIVE APPROACH TO TACKLE DAMP AND MOULD

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Deliver remainder of £12m damp and mould project.</p> | <p>Damp and mould remediated in all homes for which issues have been identified, with any outstanding works scheduled as part of targeted £3m annual investment.</p> <p>Reduction in damp and mould related disrepair cases.</p> |
| <p>‘At risk’ properties identified at an early stage.</p> | <p>Up to 7,000 smart, remote devices installed, (eg Switchee analytics solution) to provides insight into energy use and performance in customer homes. Highlighting at an early stage where a property is experiencing, or is at risk of developing, damp and mould problems.</p> <p>Remote data fully integrated with property information gathered through a more extensive stock condition review to further enhance our knowledge of where issues exist or are likely to occur.</p> |
| <p>Focus on raising awareness as part of workforce training to challenge attitudes and behaviours.</p> | <p>All colleagues trained to ensure a basic level of awareness around causes and signs of damp and mould, with technical colleagues, repair operatives and customer-facing workers subject to more detailed learning based on the expertise required in each role, enabling more accurate diagnosis and quicker response to issues.</p> |

BRING MORE HOMES UP TO EPC C

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Deliver an energy-upgrade programme to increase the proportion of homes at EPC C.</p> | <p>c1,100 properties across London, Liverpool and Carlisle brought up to EPC band C through a £26m (part SHDF funded) delivery programme in addition to 3,000 properties that will achieve this rating through the course of standard investment works. (WS4)</p> |
| <p>Establish dedicated Sustainability team and strengthen in-house capability.</p> | <p>Fully embedded team in place leading on the planning and delivery of our decarbonisation programme, maximising opportunities to develop strategic partnerships and secure additional funding through all available routes (ECO, LAD etc).</p> <p>Asset Services colleagues trained to PAS (Publicly Available Specification) 2035 Retrofit Co-ordinator, Assessor and Advisor roles as we continue to grow our capacity to meet net-zero requirements.</p> |
| <p>Identify future investment priorities.</p> | <p>Long-term fully costed retrofit plan established taking us beyond 2026 as part of an existing commitment to ensure that all domestic properties are minimum EPC band C by 2030.</p> |
| <p>Develop a better understanding of energy performance.</p> | <p>Investment priorities informed by advanced data analysis and modelling tools such as ‘Intelligent Energy’ that calculate EPC and SAP ratings across our stock and help to determine efficiency works required to each home.</p> |
| <p>Collect more comprehensive stock condition data.</p> | <p>Gaps in data greatly reduced following a more extensive rolling programme of property stock condition surveys as part of a wider strategy to ensure that a larger proportion of our stock is covered, carried out by in-house surveyors and externally commissioned providers.</p> <p>Full audit of homes completed, with urgent issues identified through the course of all property visits.</p> |

STRENGTHEN PORTFOLIO THROUGH TARGETED INVESTMENT AND STRATEGIC RATIONALISATION PLAN

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Deliver a validated planned investment programme.</p> | <p>c£500m invested in planned maintenance and improvement works to customers’ homes, including kitchen, bathroom, window and door replacement. (WS5)</p> |
| <p>Establish strategic disposal principles and criteria.</p> | <p>All decisions regarding the future of stock considered in accordance with a clear set of conditions in which disposal may be an option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography – areas of low stock density where Riverside’s presence is limited, with housing management challenges. • Viability – where assessment against economic, environmental and neighbourhood sustainability factors demonstrates a significant financial loss based on long-term costs to repair, maintain or bring up to net-zero. • Opportunity – where viable options exist to re-purpose or re-build, working in partnership or where wider funding is available to deliver better outcomes for local residents. |
| <p>Follow a rigorous appraisal process.</p> | <p>Strategic rationalisation plan in place setting out medium/long-term disposal priorities to reduce stock holdings in areas where we have a limited presence, including the M4 and M40 corridors.</p> <p>Fully transparent process, with open and honest consultation/ communication with Local Authorities, residents and wider stakeholders where applicable to ensure the right decisions are made.</p> |
| <p>Rationalise our portfolio.</p> | <p>c1,500 unit sales in the first year through transfer agreements with major providers in East London and Windsor and Maidenhead in Berkshire, in addition to Shared Ownership/Do-it Yourself Shared Ownership (DIYSO) sales and ‘business as usual’ disposals.</p> |



LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

Pressure to improve the quality of homes will continue as we prepare for enhanced decency standards and the decarbonisation agenda gathers pace, with the challenge shifting from achieving EPC C by 2030, to full net-zero by 2050. Indeed, this is where the bulk of costs will lie and questions around the future of stock for which retrofit works are just not viable, or possible, will need to be answered. New technologies such as air and ground source heat pumps will come to play a greater role and it will be important that our homes are sufficiently thermally efficient to ensure that such ‘clean heat’ solutions are effective and do not push more people into fuel poverty.

It is possible that the decarbonisation drive could also take on an ‘area’ dimension, as it becomes clear that some neighbourhoods will be very vulnerable, particularly where private landlords and lower income homeowners are unable to bring their homes up to standard. We own a lot of properties in areas in which this might come to be the case, and long-term neighbourhood sustainability could become a significant issue without Government intervention to support local initiatives. This will place greater emphasis on developing partnerships with peers and local stakeholders to deliver joined-up solutions, an important influencing priority for us that further underlines the urgent need for a strategic rationalisation plan.

OUTCOMES

Measures of success¹:

- No of buildings within scope of remediation programme for which works have not been completed or started (WS1)
- No of Building Safety case reports completed for tall buildings (WS2)
- Satisfaction that the home is safe (WS3)
- % Homes at EPC C (WS4)
- Satisfaction that home is well maintained (WS5)

¹ Two additional measures linked to the action we will take to tackle damp and mould and rationalise our portfolio are under development.



We will have an unwavering focus on the quality of our homes and repairs service.

TRUSTED CUSTOMER SERVICES



We will strengthen trust in Riverside as a landlord by improving our customers’ experiences, making it quick and easy to have queries resolved and repairs completed. We will listen to the views of our diverse customers and shape our services to reflect their needs and aspirations, keeping our promises and being transparent when our service falls short.

Riverside has made significant investment in services to customers over the last Corporate Plan period, through the delivery of ambitious improvement plans based on a “customer first” approach. There has been a step change to our digital offer, enabling customers to self-serve quickly and easily, whilst recognising that not all customers want to interact with us in this way. We have improved our CRM system, introduced a well-regarded customer app, and launched our first ‘chatbot’ to deal with routine customer service queries. But the onset of the global pandemic and related lockdowns means that people value the importance of their local community, networks and services more than ever. Consultation after consultation has highlighted the importance of the visibility of our front-line colleagues, and we understand the essential ‘anchor’ role we play in communities across the country. We continue to establish key stakeholder relationships, producing neighbourhood plans that are informed by the priorities of local people.

Through our merger with One Housing, we have made a number of clear pledges to our customers, including the delivery of better services and ensuring a louder customer voice to hold the organisation to account. Whilst the integration of customer services will be completed over the course of this plan, customers across the whole Group have already come together to monitor the delivery of the pledges and support the creation of a set of four customer principles. These will be the foundation of the way we bring our services together.

There is also a wider context to consider. The whole social housing sector is facing increasing calls to improve the quality of its homes and

services, voiced by tenants’ groups across the country and amplified by mainstream and social media. The Government is now legislating (in England) to improve the experiences of social housing tenants through introducing a robust and proactive approach to consumer regulation – closer to our current experience in Scotland – underpinned by the publication of transparent performance data and a focus on effective complaint resolution. We will see the introduction of this more demanding regime in April 2024, part way through the delivery of this plan.

However, Riverside has not been waiting passively for these changes. The drive to reset our relationship with customers principally comes from within, and the approach set out in this plan reflects the conversations we have already had with them. The sector too has been active, and we were an earlier adopter of the NHF’s ‘Together with Tenants’ initiative. We also support the principles set out in the recently published ‘Better Social Housing Review’, and many of its themes are addressed through our objectives.

Despite our ongoing work, we know there is still much more to be done to see improvements in our customer satisfaction levels. Customers have told us that they find it too difficult to have their queries resolved and their repairs completed quickly, something that further improvements to our digital services will help. Our complaint handling needs to improve. And we need to do more to demonstrate to our customers that we are not a remote national landlord, but that we understand their local issues and are committed to working in and with communities to deliver services that respond to local needs. We need to strengthen trust with our customers by being more visible, more accessible and more responsive.

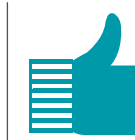
OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS WE WILL:



Listen and act, expanding engagement opportunities for customers and increase accountability.



Keep our promises by delivering high quality services and being transparent about our performance.



Improve customer satisfaction with a **‘get it right first time’** approach.

THIS IS HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES AND THE OUTCOMES WE’LL ACHIEVE

LISTEN AND ACT

Develop a formal customer engagement framework for the merged business.

A diverse range of methods for our customers to have their voices heard, sensitive to locality and based on extensive consultation, underpinned by:

- a national customer engagement framework, developed in partnership with our customers, to increase the number of local groups and regional hubs to address neighbourhood issues
- a customer led approach that addresses the diverse needs of our customers (including LGBTQ+ customers and other historically marginalised groups) to ensure we understand and act on any barriers to service for these customer group
- an annual review to create action plans to ensure that the customer voice is heard in key decisions impacting customer service, using TPAS National Engagement Standards as a framework
- reviewed and relaunched online customer involvement channels
- an annual report on the impact of customer involvement. (C1)

Engage customers in a major consultation exercise to inform design of new front-line service model.

Clear articulation of needs and aspirations of customers, exploring differences related to geography, tenure and stock density. Reflecting service principles which have already been established jointly with our customers.

Establish a Complaints Handling Centre of Excellence.

High-quality experience for customers going through the complaints process, embedding a culture of learning from our mistakes. Initial focus to be on housing services complaints, and all Stage 2 and Housing Ombudsman complaints. Potential to extend scope of Centre of Excellence to be reviewed during course of the plan. (C2/C3)

KEEP OUR PROMISES

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Develop new integrated service model that responds flexibly to different customer groups and localities.</p> | <p>A local service offer that defines responsibilities and accountabilities to all customers and neighbourhoods, ensuring an appropriate visible presence, for example agreeing the frequency of estate walkabouts or drop-in surgeries.</p> |
| | <p>Enhanced local service offers for neighbourhoods identified by the Riverside Sustainability Index as being in need.</p> |
| | <p>Strong partnerships with local organisations which can support customers to ensure that we are maximising impact and developing joined up initiatives.</p> |
| | <p>Clear arrangements to manage relationships with customers who have more complex needs and who need a consistent key contact, working with them to secure appropriate support and to sustain their tenancies.</p> |
| | <p>Service delivery which considers customers’ protected characteristics tailoring services to ensure that no customer groups are disadvantaged.</p> |
| <p>Deliver programme of improvements to repairs service, focusing on increasing appointments made and kept, and jobs completed on first visit.</p> | <p>New job management system implemented to ensure that the right operative is sent, with the right equipment and sufficient time to complete the work.</p> |
| | <p>Increased number of repairs ‘fixed first time’ via video call repair diagnostic capability.</p> |
| | <p>Number of abandoned jobs reduced, supported by improved analytics.</p> |
| | <p>Improved notifications and reminders to customers, aligning these to customers’ preferred contact method. (C4)</p> |
| <p>Introduce integrated repairs service across the Group.</p> | <p>Repairs service for all customers in London, South Region and Cumbria delivered through ‘in-house’ model.</p> |
| | <p>Extended offer of self-service repairs reporting for customers to cover all geographic areas and enable reporting of repairs to shared spaces.</p> |
| <p>Publication of meaningful performance information for customers.</p> | <p>Tenant Satisfaction Measures published to meet regulatory requirements, and in accordance with an approach agreed with customers. Additional performance measures published which focus on reducing the time taken to resolve queries in full rather than individual tasks.</p> |
| | <p>Improved transparency and communication of service costs and charges.</p> |

GET IT RIGHT FIRST TIME

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Digital services enhanced to provide a more personal customer experience and promote self-service.</p> | <p>An enhanced ‘My Riverside’ offer that will offer automated registration and log-in; payment and rent account management options; visibility of repair appointments with regular communications; and the ability to report repairs in shared spaces.</p> |
| | <p>AI-driven content solutions such as intelligent search, FAQs and knowledge, serving customers with the information they need quickly.</p> |
| | <p>Additional digital channels such as WhatsApp and Alexa to continue to meet customers’ changing needs and expectations.</p> |
| <p>Integrate our Customer Service Centres.</p> | <p>Customer Service Centres serving customers across the whole Group through the channels of their choice.</p> |
| <p>Programme of improvement to our Customer Service Centres.</p> | <p>Reduced wait times and abandonment rates through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of intelligent call routing • creation of a dedicated digital team to deliver a consistent customer experience across all digital channels – including social media, live chat, email etc • strengthening our resilience to deal with call volume fluctuation, business continuity and absence – utilising a third-party provider to enhance our CSC offer • enabling front line workers to log repairs themselves • embedding a performance management and coaching culture, and workforce planning to improve recruitment and retention. (C5) |
| <p>Improve professionalisation opportunities for front line staff.</p> | <p>Clear role specific competency matrices and associated training curricula, to support colleagues on the front line to be more responsive to customer and neighbourhood issues.</p> |
| <p>Integration of systems, policies and processes.</p> | <p>Single systems (including CRM, telephony and housing management), and consistent customer facing policies and processes introduced across the whole group.</p> |
| | <p>Relaunch Salesforce (CRM) to provide a single consistent view of all customer interactions, creating a better customer and colleague experience.</p> |
| <p>Fundamental review of Helpline Service.</p> | <p>Financial and operational viability assessed and appropriate service delivery model identified (including consideration of outsourcing option).</p> |

LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

Looking beyond 2026, the re-introduction of proactive consumer regulation will have bedded in, with increased scrutiny of landlords and the services they deliver being the norm. We will almost certainly be subject to our first inspection under the new regime, with an expectation that the merger integration will be substantially complete, evidenced by measurable improvements to the quality of our services and underpinned by meaningful engagement with customers to fix things when they go wrong. Following a period of major change, 'business as usual' should have resumed.

We will have established a clear view of what we mean by 'local', delivering a consistent service offer but one which varies to respond to the needs of different neighbourhoods and customer groups, particularly given the diversity of our customer base. Whilst having robust policies, procedures and systems will be essential, we will have a clear approach to ensuring well-trained staff have the correct professional knowledge and skills, particularly in front-line roles. The current focus on professionalism and the role of the Chartered Institute of Housing will likely result in a new offer to support our colleagues.

Ongoing developments in digital services and the omnipresence of 'apps' will mean customers' expectations will continue to increase, with the majority of customers using online services for routine transactions. Artificial intelligence and predictive analysis will also provide new opportunities to use our data in innovative ways to identify risks and better target services, enabling us to build on work that has already started. These will not be areas where we will be able to stand still, and we must keep focused on delivering a tailored digital service based on customers' individual needs rather than a generic, one-size-fits-all approach.

OUTCOMES

Measures of success:

- Satisfaction Riverside listens to customer views and acts upon them (C1)
- Complaints responded to in Complaints Handling Code timescales (C2)
- Satisfaction with complaints handling (C3)
- Satisfaction with repairs (C4)
- Net easy score (C5)
- Overall customer satisfaction (C6)



An adaptable approach will enable us to respond to our diverse customer base.

SUPPORTING OUR CUSTOMERS THROUGH THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS



We will support our customers to navigate the cost-of-living crisis, offering a range of additional services and empowering communities to become more resilient to the challenges they face.

The past few years have presented a range of serious challenges for our customers and the communities in which they live. The impact of the pandemic, followed by steep increases in inflation and the scaling back of many public services have tested the resilience of communities, and pushed many to the brink. Inflation remains at a 40 year high, with the main drivers being the rising cost of food and energy caused by the slow recovery from the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine.

This has resulted in a well-reported cost-of-living crisis, which is having an impact on families across the UK. But for poorer households, particularly those in social housing, the impact is even more significant, given that basic living costs make up a greater proportion of household budgets. The Institute for Fiscal Studies reports the annual inflation rate for the poorest 10% of households to be 3% higher than for the richest 10%.

In the Riverside context, our homes have always been located in some of the country's poorest communities, with over a third of our homes located in the country's 10% most deprived areas, from North Liverpool to Tower Hamlets in London. To improve our understanding, we commissioned a comprehensive cost-of-living survey in 2022. The sobering results show that customers across all of our neighbourhoods and tenures have been struggling to pay everyday bills over the previous 12 months and as the cost-of-living crisis deepens, customers are planning various ways of coping, many of them alarming – from cutting down on food spending

and not using the heating, to skipping meals so their children can eat. Few have resources to fall back on, with almost two thirds having no savings at all. Financial resilience and the capacity of our customers to withstand future financial shocks is low.

Riverside is already taking a proactive approach to supporting customers through a number of services, including employment support, money advice and affordable warmth. These services have been badged and promoted to customers under the "Let's Talk..." campaign.

We have recently stepped up our resources for this type of work, and following the merger with One Housing, a pledge was made to support customer livelihoods and communities through a £2.5m fund (inflation each year) to be administered through the Riverside Foundation. With pressure to support customers over the winter, we have started to see a range of projects being delivered, mainly based on scaling up existing initiatives, including expanding these to Scotland. We've also been able to provide direct financial support to customers across the Group through an enhanced hardship fund – Helping Hand – and have helped tackle food poverty through emergency payments to local food projects.

There is now the opportunity to take a more strategic approach and set out clear objectives to direct the way we support our customers through these difficult times, either through our mainstream services, or through the additional services the Foundation is able to fund.

OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS WE WILL:



Prevent evictions and homelessness by proactively working with customers to sustain their tenancies.



Support the livelihoods of our customers through projects that provide advice and support and build capacity for people to improve their own lives – going beyond the traditional landlord service.



Promote community resilience and empowerment, by supporting new and existing voluntary groups who are trying to make life better in our neighbourhoods.

THIS IS HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES AND THE OUTCOMES WE'LL DELIVER

PREVENT EVICTIONS AND HOMELESSNESS – TENANCY SUSTAINMENT

Proactively engage with customers who are in, or at risk of falling into arrears, wider debt and fuel poverty.

An integrated Income Management team working proactively with existing and new customers to tackle money, debt and fuel poverty, leading to a measurable increase in household incomes, lower bills and a reduction in evictions. [\(COL1\)](#)

The distribution of an annual £500,000 emergency grants fund through (Helping Hand) funded by the Riverside Foundation.

Provide an extended intensive Tenancy Sustainment service for those at immediate risk of eviction.

A fully integrated tenancy sustainment service funded by the Riverside Foundation, connecting customers with the most urgent needs to a wider range of support services through intensive intervention. [\(COL2\)](#)

SUPPORT THE LIVELIHOOD OF CUSTOMERS

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| Develop a coherent approach to poverty alleviation. | Evidenced-based programme of Foundation funded activity focusing on reducing food and fuel poverty and digital exclusion. Group-wide projects rolled out following the completion of evaluated pilots (which have commenced). |
| Explore options to establish a customer health and wellbeing offer. | A number of Foundation funded pilots completed to consider the most effective ways in which we can support customers with complex needs to improve their mental health and wellbeing. |
| Support customers into employment and training opportunities. | Full review of our current employment and training customer support service completed (including external funding sources), with a coherent approach developed which is sensitive to locality. (COL3) Employment and apprenticeship opportunities maximised through social value opportunities with contractors. |
| Support the digital inclusion of customers. | Development of a comprehensive package of measures focusing on accessibility, motivation and skills to enable more customers to get online. |
| Maximise the use of data and evidence to inform decision making. | Up to date, robust data sources informing service development and supporting decision making, with a continuation of our Cost-of-Living Survey on an annual basis. Project delivery monitored against clearly defined outcomes and appropriate performance indicators, with all significant projects (and pilots) evaluated to identify best practice. (COL4) |
| Ensure The Riverside Foundation is equipped to play its role. | A well-supported, directed and governed Riverside Foundation which is well placed to invest the funding granted to it by Riverside, also maximising external match funding opportunities. |

PROMOTE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT

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| A dedicated community fund established to support voluntary groups in our localities. | At least 10% of total Riverside Foundation funding ringfenced for community projects that have been developed by community organisations, helping to address local challenges. (COL5) |
| Building community capacity. | Community empowerment training programme developed with a focus on fundraising and project delivery, supporting people to establish and run a wide range of local initiatives. Community directories established, signposting customers to organisations that can offer support and help. |

LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

Whilst the future of the economy remains uncertain it is likely that many customers living in social housing will continue to face increasing financial difficulties. Even if inflation eases, there will have been a step change in the cost-of-living, and the capacity of other public services to function well has probably been hampered for some time to come. Whilst the Government has made a commitment to curb inflation and support economic growth across all areas of the UK through its levelling-up approach, it is likely that it will be some time before customers feel significant benefits.

Against this backdrop Riverside’s commitment to support livelihoods and communities is a long-term one, with annual funding envisaged beyond this current plan period, expended through an increasingly well-run Foundation. This is essential work, and with the increased scale of our investment, it is important that an integrated approach is developed to support customers in the longer-term, drawing from the experiences of Riverside and One Housing. The merger presents the opportunity to develop scaled-up projects across all geographies, utilising Riverside Foundation Funding, together with external sources. However, it will also be essential to harness the power of communities and support the development of smaller scale projects and initiatives informed by local intelligence and knowledge.



OUTCOMES

Measures of success:

- additional income generated through money advice (COL1)
- % tenancies sustained for those supported (COL2)
- customers securing training/jobs/better jobs (COL3)
- no. of customers supported through all services (COL4)
- satisfaction landlord makes positive contribution to neighbourhood (COL5)



LEADERSHIP IN CARE AND SUPPORT



We will reshape our services to ensure we remain one of the country’s leading providers of supported housing and care, maintaining a strong voice to advocate for customers with support and care needs and increasing our impact in preventing and tackling homelessness.

Our recent merger has brought together two organisations equally passionate about providing care and support in a housing setting.

We have now created a housing association which provides accommodation for over 12,000 customers with a wide range of needs, ranging from those who at risk of becoming homeless or experiencing homelessness, people living with mental health conditions and older people in both independent living and care settings. This makes us one of the country’s largest providers of supported housing. We are committed to continuing to operate at scale.

But in the current operating environment we face two very real challenges.

Firstly, the need for our homes and services is increasing sharply as the nation learns to live with Covid and grapples with a cost-of-living crisis which is widening inequalities. We are seeing the greatest impact on those who already face disadvantage: whether through poverty, health or disability, age, substance misuse – or indeed a combination of these things. At the same time many of the other services they depend on have been cut back. We are also seeing longer term structural changes playing out as the UK population ages and

dependency rises, particularly in many of the ‘left behind’ places where we work.

At the same time our ability to deliver services that meet this rising need in a cost-effective way has become more constrained. Our delivery costs are escalating, often at a much faster rate than our income. And whilst the exemption of supported housing from recent rent capping proposals is welcome, hard-pressed commissioners have triggered a race to the bottom in what they are prepared to pay for services, often forced to take a very short-term approach to what they specify. As a result, salaries for care and support workers remain relatively low, and recruitment and retention of a stable workforce has now become a strategic risk as colleagues leave the sector for better paid roles. At the same time standards are (rightly) increasing as we see the burden of regulation increase across a range of regulators following a series of high-profile service scandals.

So whilst the rationale for Riverside to provide care and support services at scale has never been more compelling, our services in general are run on very tight margins – well below the Group average. From a viability perspective, there is a limit to what we can do.

In this context, over the next three years there is a strong driver for consolidation and a degree of service rationalisation. If we want to thrive and continue to play a leading role in meeting some of the nation’s most challenging housing and support needs, then we need to do this from a platform of strength and long-term business sustainability. We need to identify what we do well and where, and then do it better, focussing on genuine areas of expertise. At the same time we need to recognise when and where others are better placed to lead and it makes sense to step back, taking clear and well-informed decisions about when to exit services and dispose of assets based on a common set of rules:

- Services retained will be strategically relevant.
- We have assurance that we are able to deliver the service model safely.
- We have assurance that we are able to deliver a quality service.
- The service will be financially viable.
- The service will be aligned to our geographical footprint.

In this way we will create a business of the right size and with the right balance of activities.

OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS WE WILL:



Maintain our position as a leading mainstream housing association provider of supported housing and care.



Create a focused and high performing business building on the best of what we do.



Exit services where we we’re not able to provide best value or achieve viability.

THIS IS HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES AND THE OUTCOMES WE’LL DELIVER

MAINTAIN A SECTOR-LEADING POSITION

A narrower focus on three core customer groups and four core products.

Majority of services focused on three core customer groups: older people, people with mental health needs and people at risk of/experiencing homelessness (including veterans, young people and young parents). (CS1)

Services for these three customer groups delivered in four core product settings: supported housing, retirement living, extra care and specialist support and care.

Maintain a strong voice of influence within the sector.

Tangible policy changes secured through specific campaigns focused on: regulation of ‘exempt’ accommodation (minimising the burden on Registered Providers); revenue funding for veterans supported housing (building on recent success of Operation Fortitude); long-term benefits and sustainable funding for supported housing; workforce challenge. Working with sector partners.

Renewed external communications (media/social media) profile to reflect narrower approach to core customer groups, building on success of ‘Ending Homelessness Together’, with measurable increase in influencing impact. (CS2)

Proactively influencing local commissioners through a strategic approach to relationship management set out in a Contact and Commissioner Engagement Plan, with measurable improvement identified through our periodic perceptions audits.

Business development strategy.

Business development activities (primarily tendering for new contracts) aligned with a new Business Development Strategy, focused on core customer groups, products and target geography. No net growth in size of business as measured by bedspaces and turnover. Note: business development priorities also informed by viability review (see below). (CS3)

Preference for owner/operator models, with specific reviews of the following:

- reverse managed agent arrangements to test viability
- large-scale floating support contracts to assess operating model, risk and capacity to deliver
- learning disability services with view to retain but not expand.

Bids emphasising (where relevant) three cross-cutting areas of expertise and sector innovation which set us apart from other providers: expertise in working with veterans, health partnerships and positive psychological approaches.

New development.

Programme of new homes delivered in accordance with Growth and Development Strategy and aligned with core customer groups, products and geography. Including completion of pipeline of at least five new extra care schemes, going beyond Homes England targets.

No further growth through merger or strategic acquisitions.

HIGH PERFORMING BUSINESS

Business integration and improvement.

Riverside/One Housing operations fully integrated with common systems, processes, performance management approaches and policies, with appropriate support and training for colleagues. To include a fundamental review of Income Collection. Colleague Terms and Conditions reviewed and harmonised as far as possible.

Performance improvement, controls, compliance, and risk mitigation driven by a new Business Performance Plan with a review of measures (including financial) reported to an integrated Care and Support Committee.

Continued focus on co-production and engagement.

Demonstrable impact on customer satisfaction (CS4), learning from best of both OHG/ Riverside ways of working to achieve better practice.

Effective management of the ‘estate’.

Thorough knowledge of combined ‘estate’ (assets, funding and services) secured through mapping process.

Asset management services – including repairs, planned maintenance, communal area management – delivered effectively through an Estates Plan cross referenced to the Group Asset Management Strategy. Estate Plan to integrate current improvement projects including: SHAR, RLIP and SHIP.

Improving services in care and extra care settings.

Mobilisation plan delivered for new extra care services, based on clear service model and processes to ensure effective marketing, compliance and care planning.

Scale of registered care activity maintained at current level, with all CQC registered schemes to achieve ‘good rating’ as a minimum, with a plan in place for services to improve to ‘outstanding’.

Recruitment and retention.

Measurable improvement of colleague recruitment and retention through concerted actions set out in a common Recruitment and Retention Plan overseen by a Workforce Planning Board. (CS5)

Accompanying Wellbeing Action Plan delivered.

EXIT

Geographical consolidation.

Support services focused in areas where we have the critical mass, in order to retain excellent relationships and drive service innovation that makes a difference. A smaller geographical footprint, with service exit (and related asset disposals) driven by a clear rationalisation plan, starting by exploring options to withdraw from the West of England and West Midlands as contracts expire or through stock transfer.

Exit of non-viable services.

Services proactively identified for exit ahead of contract renewal dates (in the case of commissioned services) using the core service classification and the outcome of the viability review. (CS6)

Asset disposal.

Assets disposed where services no longer viable in the long-term (and cannot be repurposed for core services), or outside target geographical footprint. Reflected in asset management strategy.

LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

As we concentrate on shaping a financially viable and focused business, we will retain a long-term outlook and ensure we retain our vision for care and support as an innovator and key player in supported housing and care.

Recent experience has shown that a lot can happen in three years. Riverside and One Housing have already demonstrated resilience and capacity to rapidly respond to the challenges of Covid and deliver safe services for very vulnerable customers. This gives a solid foundation as we prepare for the long term where flexibility and adaptability are critical.

In an uncertain world the ability to review, take stock and deliver recovery plans will be ever-more important. What we do know for certain is that the trajectory of needs in supported housing and care will only increase with an ageing population and increasing profiles of complex and multiple needs.

As we look beyond 2026, we anticipate a demand for flexible and future proofed services for older people as well as a rise in intergenerational and care ready provision. We expect to see further investment in mental health services and a demand for providers who can support customers with complex needs. This includes having the infrastructure

and capacity to support psychological services and integration with health and clinical service providers. In our long term view we expect to see an ongoing commitment to preventing and tackling homelessness and successful providers will be those who can evidence impact of their services models and approaches.

A key priority for the care and support business will be keeping on top of latest developments in policy and practice, designing innovative service models and maintaining our evidence base of the impact of service models, so we are able to contribute to national debate and influence commissioners on creating services that are fit for 2030 onwards.

We will strive to innovate in order to help the most vulnerable in our society



OUTCOMES

Measures of success:

- % services in core categories (CS1)
- increase in influencing impact (CS2)
- measure of scale of operation (bedspaces) (CS3)
- customer satisfaction (CS4)
- staff retention rate (CS5)
- average scheme operating margin (CS6)



NEW HOMES, BETTER PLACES



We will build a range of high-quality homes within our means: a mix of new homes to meet need and provide wider opportunities, and replacement homes which create better places for our customers to thrive.

Building decent, affordable homes is fundamental to our purpose – it is what our founders wanted us to achieve. This has become all the more important at a time when the country continues to face an affordability crisis which sees average house prices at over nine times average incomes, the majority of rents in the private sector outstripping the benefits available to poorer households, and 1.2 million households waiting for social housing.

Three years ago we set out how we would play our part in addressing this national emergency, and since then we are proud to have built around 2,800 homes – 80% affordable – broadly in line with our plans. We also said that we wanted to grow through merger, to help increase our financial capacity to do more and build more. In December 2021 the 16,000-home One Housing joined Riverside, and at the heart of the business case for the merger was a pledge we made to our customers and stakeholders to build more affordable homes over the long-term.

However, the current environment for housebuilding is extremely challenging, with building costs increasing higher than the standard rate of inflation, interest rates rising, and Government imposed rent caps taking £40m out of our surpluses over the period of this plan. We need to recognise these constraints and cut our cloth accordingly, and whilst our long-term ambition remains, over the next three years we must only build what we can afford, honouring commitments we have already made.

That is why we will deliberately temper our targets over the current plan period, although we will continue to review our capacity as the economic position becomes clearer. We will not be alone in taking this approach. In Scotland, we have taken the very deliberate approach to deprioritise the development of new homes to focus more on the condition of existing homes.

The quality and location of our new homes are as important as the scale of our housebuilding. In our Big Conversation with customers, colleagues and our governance community, building homes was ranked second amongst our strategic priorities, only surpassed by improving the quality of our existing homes. But through our more nuanced discussions it has become clear that investment in new and existing homes are not alternative choices. The life of our housing stock is finite, and increasingly we are having to consider replacing older homes which are unsuitable for 21st century needs and will never realistically reach net zero standards, with a much better offer. Development through regeneration is becoming as much a part of our approach to managing our assets as our stock investment programmes.

So, whilst building new homes will remain an important priority for the Group over the period of this plan, regeneration will play an increasingly central role as we seek to use our development capacity to make better places and ‘level up’ our poorer performing neighbourhoods.

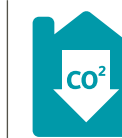
OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS WE WILL:



Build new homes to help address housing need and replace existing stock through regeneration.



Provide a choice of homes through a range of tenures, but with an emphasis on affordability.



Build high quality homes, that create better places and help reduce our carbon emissions.

THIS IS HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES AND THE OUTCOMES WE’LL DELIVER

BUILD NEW HOMES

Complete a large-scale development programme.

Around 4,400 new homes started over life of the plan (and a similar number of completions) – addressing evidenced local need, market demand and local strategic priorities. Continue to review financial capacity adjusting our programme accordingly, prioritising contractual and strategic funding commitments and promises made to tenants through regeneration schemes. (D1)

Campaign for policy changes to support the delivery of affordable housing and regeneration (with H4N/G15).

Regulations that follow the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill/NPPF require rigorous identification of affordable housing requirements and prioritise use of infrastructure levy for affordable housing provisions. Removal of ‘Net additionality’ rule which restricts Homes England investment in regeneration. Influencing to target party manifestos ahead of general election, expected in 2024.

PROVIDE CHOICE

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Build a range of homes to meet need and provide opportunities for those seeking to get on the housing ladder.</p> | <p>Over 70 % of our new homes completed will be affordable tenures (social/affordable rent or shared ownership), including a programme of homes to meet the needs of care and support customers – prioritising older customers through extra care and move-on accommodation for those who are homeless. (D2)</p> |
| <p>Concentrated in areas where we can make a difference</p> | <p>New homes predominantly built in places which are in or adjacent to our current footprint.</p> <p>Building to commence on 10 regeneration schemes which will replace unsuitable homes and provide additional homes to widen choice of tenure, delivering more than 3,000 homes over the next 10 years (see box for detail).</p> |

BUILD HIGH QUALITY HOMES

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Construct intelligent, safe and sustainable homes, working towards net zero.</p> | <p>Homes built to meet higher standards which will drive increased customer satisfaction, with an integrated approach to aftercare developed. (D3)</p> <p>All new homes built in compliance with the first stage of the Future Homes and Buildings Standard, with a new approach developed to monitor sustainability metrics. (D4)</p> <p>Completion of a 449 modular home scheme in Kent built to achieve EPC level A – with modular housing representing half of our Homes England Strategic Partnering programme. (D5)</p> <p>Preparations completed for the implementation of the second stage Future Homes and Buildings Standard 2025, with whole life cycle assessment undertaken of all proposed schemes to inform design.</p> |
| <p>Delivered through strategic partnering arrangements and other alliances.</p> | <p>65 % of the overall programme funded through strategic partnering arrangements with Homes England and GLA. A significant proportion of the remaining programme delivered through strategic joint ventures with private sector partners.</p> |
| <p>Generating social value for our communities.</p> | <p>Maximising employment and training opportunities and other community benefits through our procurement processes, with significant employment and training opportunities generated for customers. Around half of our overall Homes England funded programme delivered through SME developers.</p> |
| <p>Carefully overseen and monitored through a risk-based approach.</p> | <p>Projects approved through a ‘gateway’ approach which controls market exposure and limits capital risk within set investment parameters. Delivery and sales risk overseen through a new Group Development Committee with supporting executive structures.</p> |

LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

Whilst our ability to build new homes will be constrained by current economic and financial conditions, we still have a long-term ambition to scale up our house building, beyond the pre-merger plans of Riverside and One Housing. We see this as one of the key merger dividends, and our aspiration is to increase the number of homes we build by 40 % over a 30 year period.

But over this time, we will also see standards increase, perhaps including the need to build homes which are ‘zero carbon ready’ after 2025, with low-carbon heating systems mandatory. We will use the period of this plan to prepare, identifying our preferred technical solutions and adjusting our specifications and plans to reflect.

We are also likely to see the need for the regeneration of our existing homes and estates increase, as it becomes clear that the cost of achieving net zero carbon is uneconomic for some of our oldest homes. Whilst our current regeneration schemes will take up to 10 years to deliver in full, we need to look ahead and continue to campaign for a sensitive comprehensive area-based approach to decarbonisation and regeneration which addresses all tenures in a single place.

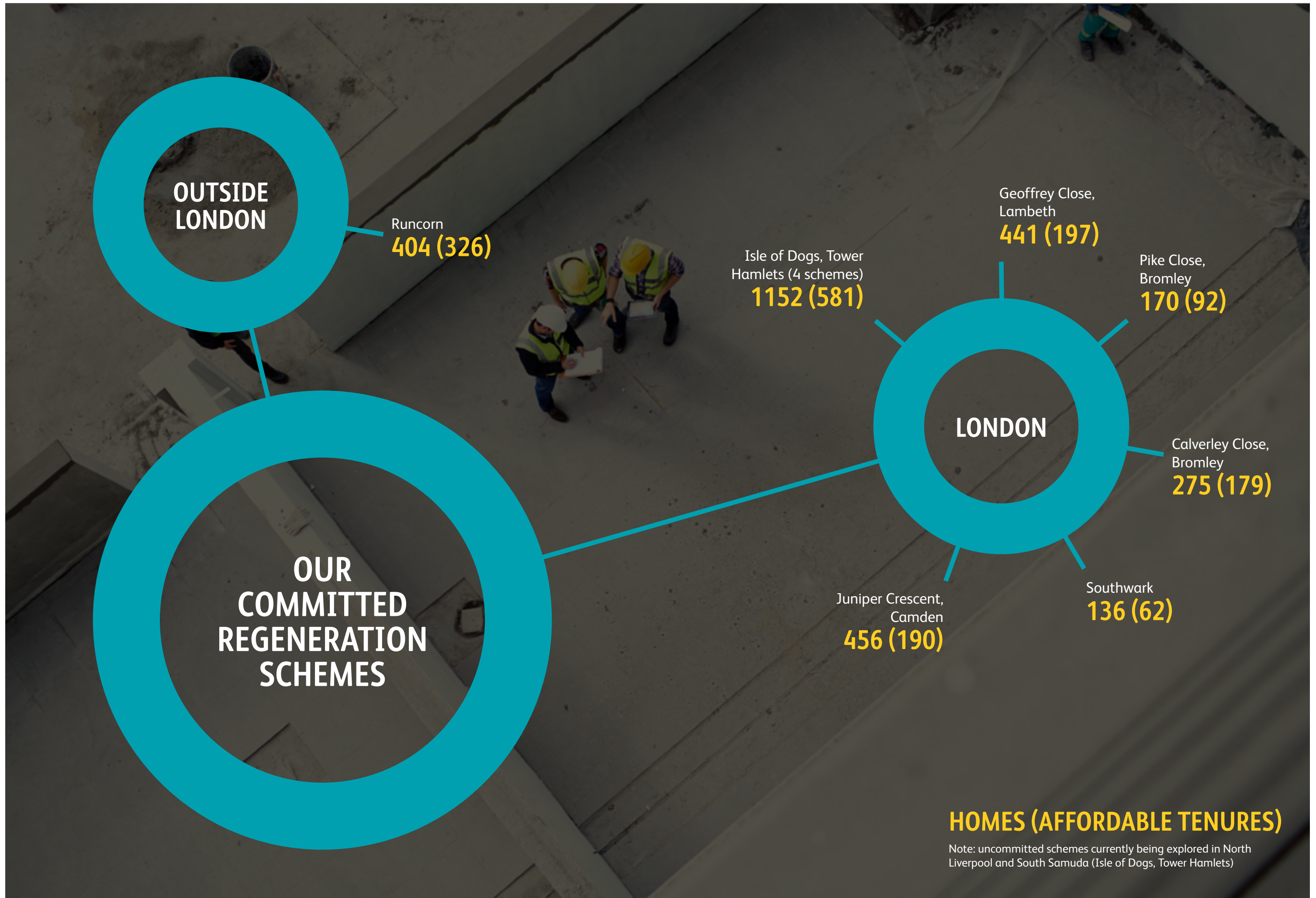


OUTCOMES

Measures of success:

- No. of new homes started/completed (D1)
- % affordable tenures started (D2)
- % customer satisfaction with quality of home (D3)
- ave. SAP rating of new homes (D4)
- % programme delivered by MMC (D5)





CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

In addition to the key deliverables set out under each of the five objective areas set out in the plan – the following ‘cross-cutting’ themes have also been identified that will underpin all activity.



Value for money/ efficiency

Driving down costs to achieve our objectives with the least amount of expenditure on resource, minimising wasted time, money and effort. More streamlined working practices and effective procurement. Articulated through the business plan.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Identified as a new organisational value (‘We are inclusive’), promoting a culture in which both customers and colleagues are treated fairly with dignity and respect, ensuring that we are transparent and honest. Supported by a dedicated ED & I strategy.

People

Building upon existing commitment to improve our colleague experience, becoming an attractive, employer of choice where people feel valued and empowered to perform at their best and where they have the appropriate professional qualifications to comply with regulatory requirements. Improving recruitment and retention of talent, investing in health and wellbeing, supporting through cost-of-living crisis. Detailed objectives and activities set out in a dedicated People Plan.

Data and information

Improving the definition, capture, quality, integration and analysis of the data we hold through well-governed processes. This will be the foundation of accurate external and internal reporting and will inform better decision making through advanced techniques such as artificial intelligence and predictive analytics. Set out in our digital strategy.



HOW WE WILL DELIVER THE PLAN



The activity included within this plan under each of the objectives is deliberately set at a high level, and delivery will be driven through nine supporting strategies under our Strategy Framework, and a comprehensive People Plan (see 'Cross-cutting themes').

We will measure our progress in achieving the outcomes set out in the plan through a bi-annual report to Group Board, incorporating a review of activity under each objective and performance against the strategic performance indicators identified in this document. Updates will be shared with our involved customers, and for metrics that also feature within the new suite of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM), performance will be published on our website as part of our commitment to be more open and transparent.

Progress in delivering each strategy will be reported to Board on an annual basis, with performance reviewed more regularly throughout each year at Committee and Executive level as part of our wider governance structure.

The plan retains a degree of flexibility to respond to changes beyond our control within our operating environment and will be reviewed annually. It is essential that we 'keep the plan alive' and we will do this by communicating it across the organisation, sharing key messages and working to incorporate it into everyday work through our planning framework.

Relevant risks and mitigating actions associated with the delivery of this plan are captured within the Group Risk Register which is updated on a rolling basis or as circumstances require.




It is essential that we 'keep the plan alive'

Get in touch or find out more

 www.riverside.org.uk
email: info@riverside.org.uk
Follow us on Twitter @RiversideUK

Customer Service Centre

 **24 hours, 365 days a year.** So you can call
at the weekend or even on Christmas Day
0345 111 0000

 Speak to a member of our team

 We are happy to accept **Relay UK** calls.

The Riverside Group Limited

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A charitable Registered Society under
the Co-operative and Community
Benefit Societies Act 2014

April 2023

Details correct at time of publishing
R8/100-0423V1.0E_ARC