

Report to:	STOCKPORT HOMES MEMBER COMMITTEE		
Date of Meeting:	15 February 2021 Stockport Homes Member Committee		
Title of Report:	SOCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY		
Report of:	ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE		
Confidentiality	Non Confidential		
Purpose of Report:	To outline SHG's proposed approach to investing money, time and skills in local communities to deliver on its mission to be "one team, transforming lives".		
Type of Report	Consultation		
Recommendation(s):	That the Member Committee note and comment on the Social Investment Strategy.		
Financial Implications of the recommendations	The majority of the actions within the Strategy can be delivered within existing resources. External funding will be sought through community or charity partners and applications made to external funders through Foundations to maximise the resource available.		
Value for Money Implications of the recommendations	Social value measures are used where appropriate to ensure projects are delivering desired outcomes for individuals and communities. By including social value commitments within procurement processes, additional value for money will be achieved through contractors.		
Risk Implications of the recommendations	Risk Number	Risk Description	Risk Mitigation
	7	Positive, strategic relationships / approaches to partnership working are not maintained with SMBC, local politicians and other key local partners, including Greater Manchester (GM)	Regular dialogue with partners, offers of support and joint working will ensure SHG is aware of potential threats to working relations and can act to mitigate these.

	9	The long-term objectives / benefits of operating in a group structure are not delivered	Funding and income generating opportunities available through Foundations Stockport will ensure the benefits of the charitable community benefit society are realised.
	14	Rent and water arrears increase to unsustainable levels	Measures in the strategy around timely financial support and encouraging resilience and self-help will reduce the number of households reaching crisis point, freeing up resources to better support those who do.
Council Impact Assessment (CIA)	Does a CIA need to be completed? No	If so, has one been completed?	
Comments of the Stockport Homes Monitoring Group	<p>The Stockport Homes Monitoring Group discussed the Social Investment Strategy. The discussion covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers highlighted that they were not always aware of the wide range of social investment projects delivered by Stockport Homes, or how to access the opportunities to benefit themselves or their communities. • There was strong support for the objectives identified that were felt to be in line with customer views of what Stockport Homes should be prioritising. An additional action was included following the feedback around greater publicity of opportunities to customers. 		
Content of Report signed-off by Director	Sandra Coleing 23/11/2020		
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SOCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

2020-2023

18 November 2020

SOCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** SHG has social objectives far wider than ‘just’ being a social housing provider. Its mission is to be ‘One team, Transforming lives’. This Social Investment Strategy sets out how SHG invests money, time and skills in local communities to deliver on that mission. It also measures the economic, environmental and social benefits created for individuals and neighbourhoods when delivering services or projects.
- 1.2** Social investment benefits local communities through reduced inequalities for health, education and household income, and social landlords through reduced tenancy turnover, settled and sustainable neighbourhoods and higher levels of engagement. Well designed and managed local social investment has a significant multiplier effect, benefitting the local economy many times more than the initial investment¹ by attracting other sources of funding and helping to keep money circulating in the local economy.
- 1.3** This Strategy replaces the Corporate Social Responsibility policy 2017-2020 and builds on the achievements of the Inclusive Growth Strategy 2019-20, which focused on reducing inequalities in the Borough through a range of initiatives to invest in social infrastructure and to facilitate easier access to quality employment opportunities.
- 1.4** Key successes from the Inclusive Growth Strategy for 2019/20 included:
- Fabulous Foundations holiday club engaging with 99 individual children over 900 times. 100% reported a positive impact on their children’s happiness during the holiday, self-confidence, feelings about school; 100% confirmed a positive impact on their finances and that it had helped them combine work and childcare.
 - In Summer 2019, Holiday Kitchen attendance doubling from the previous year to 290 parents and children, providing 1000+ healthy meals for families.
 - 1,661 digital learners attending drop in sessions during the year. 150 new learners were recruited, of which 71% were over 70 years. Learner retention was 90% for one month and over 75% for three months.
 - The Employment team receiving 601 referrals, supporting 133 individuals into employment. A further 130 individuals were supported into accredited and non-accredited training, eight individuals were supported in to apprenticeships and eight secured work placements.

¹ Local Multiplier 3 (LM3) was developed by the New Economics Foundation as a simple and understandable way of measuring local economic impact.

- Your Local Pantry network recruiting and training 31 new volunteers with a total of 4,314 volunteering hours given. 514 new pantry members joining and a fifth pantry opening in Woodley. There were 9,232 individual visits to the pantries, offering potential savings to members of £575 per household per year with total savings across the membership of £106,168 in 2019/20.
- Income gains for 3,133 customers supported by the Money Advice Team amounting to £6.8m, the highest annual gains recorded since the team's creation in 2014.
- Furniture recycling saw a 23% increase in demand for collections and deliveries, with 628 referrals received from a range of agencies and 702 donations offered.
- TLC providing 935 sessions of counselling 2019/20, from 384 referrals and providing 15 counselling students with high quality placements.
- Carecall supporting more than 4,500 people in Stockport to Live Well at Home. The team answered more than 175,000 calls for help and attended more than 4,000 emergencies in the home.

2 CONTEXT

2.1 National context

2.2 The social housing sector is one of the biggest social investors in communities and neighbourhoods, with annual funding exceeding £750million². The need for this investment can be clearly seen through a range of evidence correlating social housing and multiple deprivation.

2.3 A recent review found that 45% of social housing tenants in England were earning the lowest fifth of income, with 44% living in poverty after housing costs were taken into consideration³. 37% of social renters were in employment compared to 59% of the population. 23% were off work due to sickness, being in education or caring responsibilities, compared to 9% of the overall population⁴. In addition, those in social housing are 1.5 more times likely to suffer with poor mental health⁵. A recent Lloyds Bank survey found a strong link between digital engagement and social disadvantage. For example, a larger

² Thomas, S; 'HACT Community Investment Strategy', June 2015

³ Tunstall, R & Pleace, N; *Social Housing: Evidence Review* York, University of York 2018 http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/136236/1/MHCLG_Green_Paper_Review.pdf.

⁴ Johnson, R; Griffiths, C; Nottingham T *At Home? A Study of Mental Health Issues Arising in Social Housing*, Leeds, National Institute for Mental Health in England, 2006 <http://www.rjaconsultancy.org.uk/At%20Home%20Full%20Report%20v7.vi.pdf>.

⁵ *ibid*

proportion of benefit claimants have the lowest level of digital engagement compared to the UK average (40% compared to 33%)⁶.

2.4 The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing health and economic inequalities⁷. Between the start of March and the middle of April 2020, age-adjusted death rates in the most deprived tenth of areas in the UK were more than double those in the least deprived tenth of areas⁸. Those on lower incomes are the most likely to have underlying medical conditions that make them vulnerable to COVID-19⁹, and low paid sectors such as hospitality and retail have been particularly badly hit by the restrictions and changes to consumer spending which have led to widespread job losses¹⁰.

2.5 Transport links and the local environment can also have a significant impact on health and access to employment and training opportunities. Children living in urban areas are more likely to be exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution, which have proven links to long term physical and mental ill-health¹¹. Expensive and unreliable public transport can make low paid jobs unsustainable due to the cost of commuting, particularly to locations on the edge of urban areas¹².

2.6 Regional context

Greater Manchester (GM) Combined Authority recently launched its Social Value Strategy for the region, with six priorities:

- *Provide the best employment you can*
- *Keep the air clean in Greater Manchester*
- *Create the employment and skills opportunities we need to 'Build back better'*
- *Be part of a strong local community*
- *Make your organisation greener*
- *Develop a local, GM based and resilient supply chain*¹³

SHG is a member of the Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) group. This consortium is a collective of housing providers covering one in five people living in GM. Social investment is a key focus for most housing providers in the region, with significant financial and 'in-kind' commitments to social investment in local communities, increasingly so with the additional

⁶ Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020, May 2020

⁷ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/action-required-to-tackle-health-inequalities-in-latest-phase-of-covid-19-response-and-recovery/>

⁸ <https://www.ifs.org.uk/inequality/covid-19-and-inequalities/>

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ <https://www.pwc.co.uk/premium/covid-19/uk-economic-update-covid-19.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.nhs.uk/news/mental-health/air-pollution-link-mental-health-problems/>

¹² https://shura.shu.ac.uk/24128/1/tackling_transport-related_barriers_low-income_neighbourhoods.pdf

¹³ GMCA, Social Value Strategy

challenges of Covid-19. Specific GM sub groups focus on supporting residents into employment, health initiatives and building quality, affordable homes, with additional themed groups developing as a result of the response to Covid-19 such as a combined response to food poverty.

2.7 Local Context

2.7.1 Deprivation in Stockport

Although Stockport is one of the least deprived boroughs in Greater Manchester, it is also characterised by pockets of relatively high deprivation which is increasing¹⁴. These are primarily concentrated in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of social housing stock such as Brinnington, Offerton, Lancashire Hill and Adswold and Bridgehall.

The top three areas in Stockport for deprivation are in the top 0.3% most deprived in the country and include Heaton Norris and Lancashire Hill, North Brinnington and North East Brinnington. Three quarter (76%) of all households living in these three areas are living in an SHG managed property.

Whilst Stockport has lower unemployment rates than the rest of Greater Manchester, there is much higher unemployment in the areas of deprivation where Stockport Homes has many of its homes, as outlined at 2.7.1. It was reported in August 2020 that Stockport had seen the highest percentage increase in GM for Universal Credit claimants from a year ago, with its total number rising by 6,432, or a 135% increase¹⁵.

A long-term vision for reducing inequalities is set out in the Council's Borough Plan¹⁶, to which many of the principles around social investment are integral. The Council is prioritising sustainable Living Wage employment opportunities; supporting young people and those furthest from the job market into work; continuing to embed the Stockport Family approach to working with children, young people and their families across all services, and developing an approach to community wealth building that uses land, property, procurement and employment to benefit local people. The Council's 'Investing in Stockport Plan' also includes priorities around people making positive choices and being independent and around safe, resilient and inclusive communities.

2.7.2 Place based working

Stockport Council has adopted place-based delivery models, focussed on the local needs of each area.

In 2017, strategic leads from the Council brought together Social Care, the TPA, Stockport Homes & Greater Manchester Police to start the first version of Stockport Place Based initiative (PBI). The project is aimed at proactive early

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

¹⁵ MEN, "Number of people on Universal Credit up in all ten of our boroughs... it's more than doubled in some places" 11th August 2020

¹⁶ Owston, P; "Investing in Stockport – Stockport's Borough plan 2015-20", SMBC August 2015

intervention to reduce demand for more costly reactive services such within emergency health and social care. There are PBIs in Brinnington/Lancashire Hill, Reddish and Victoria areas of Stockport. For several years, Stockport Homes has provided significant staffing resources to the PBIs as part of its commitment to transforming lives and working in partnership.

More recently, place based working has been extended through eight multi-disciplinary 'Team Around the Place' (TAP) partnerships. TAP enables people to engage in peer support and voluntary activities, with the aim of improving individual and community capacity, wellbeing and resilience. SHG has committed in the Service Improvement Plan to "*Support the Council by playing a key role in existing and new place-based working initiatives and develop the 'Team around the place' support network where opportunities arise to expand it*". SHG are a key partner in TAP and the lead for the Stepping Hill area. The Prevention Alliance (TPA) for which SHG is a key partner also lead two of the TAPs and are heavily involved in the PBI work.

SHG is also a partner in 'One Stockport', an initiative conceived by Stockport Council to 'build back better' by supporting people through the recovery from the pandemic, connecting communities, promoting health and wellbeing and supporting local businesses. TAP has a fundamental role in One Stockport through identifying and supporting at a local level those who need help during the pandemic and its aftermath.

2.7.3 SHG approach

From its mission of 'One Team, Transforming Lives', to the content of values conversations of individual members of staff, social investment is at the heart of SHG's business model. This commitment was strengthened further by the creation of the SHG subsidiary 'Foundations' Community Benefit Society in 2019, with aims focussing specifically on:

- *supporting people into employment, relieving poverty, relieving food poverty and developing digital skills;*
- *supporting customers in local communities and delivering support services to help people live independently;*
- *empowering communities to develop networks of support, including targeted work with people who may experience disadvantage such as people with disabilities, from BME communities and those with complex needs;*
- *working in partnership to reduce demand on statutory services; and*
- *supporting the development of the third sector, ensuring additional resources and services are secured.*

This Social Investment Strategy builds on SHG's Corporate Social Responsibility policy and Inclusive Growth Strategy by bringing the focus on social investment and generation of social value into one place to identify, measure and celebrate the depth and breadth of work being delivered. To maximise the positive outcomes from SHG's social investment, external funding sources will be proactively sought for all projects with support from the Funding Officer and Business Development Officer.

It has strong links to the Customer Voice and Influence Strategy, particularly Objective 3 around strengthening community development. SHG's role as an employer in social investment is covered the People & OD Strategy 2018-21, as well as the Equality & Diversity Strategy 2018-21, but included as an action under 4.1. The SHG Asset Strategy and Greenspace Strategy have close links to this, too. Lastly, SHG's Climate Change Strategy 2020-25 sets out Stockport Homes' five-year plan to cut carbon emissions through increased energy efficiency and low carbon technologies, including transport, greenspace and waste management. These areas of investment have not been duplicated in this Strategy, but outcomes from them will be included in measures and monitoring of SHG's overall approach.

2.7.4 Measuring success

Social investment at SHG is funded by both internal and external sources. Some examples are listed below.

- Core business, e.g. Money Advice Team, Housing Support Team, Neighbourhood Investment Budget, Stockport Homes Community Fund
- Income generation, e.g. Gift aid contributions from Three Sixty to Foundations, water monies.
- External tenders and contracts secured, e.g. Motiv8, TPA, Housing First.
- External grant funding, e.g. Big Lottery, Stockport Local, WEA, Kickstart etc.
- Procurement and supply chain, e.g. procuring local businesses, social value measures in contracts.
- Assets, e.g. investment in community centres

Whilst specific social investment projects are regularly publicised and celebrated, to date the total annual contribution to social investment made by SHG has not been quantified. Appendix 1 gives an overview of social investment spend during 2019/20, which totals £4,386,210. This will be used as a starting point to develop SHG's approach to measuring social investment and its impact as the strategy is delivered.

As well as measuring SHG's social investment in communities, social value is also used to measure the benefits created when delivering specific projects. The approach set out in the Corporate Social Responsibility Policy of measuring social value where it is relevant and proportionate to do so will be retained for this Strategy, using the HACT model and others as appropriate.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1** A range of customer insight and consultation has been used to shape this strategy, in line with the SHG Customer Voice and Influence Strategy 2020-23. Some examples are given below.

Customer consultation

- 3.2** Almost 1,300 customers were contacted during August 2020 to gather views on future service format, engagement preferences and priorities for their local neighbourhood which will feed into the refresh of tailored Neighbourhood Action Plans. Responses around the impact of Your Local Pantry, energy advice and money advice support during the Covid restrictions are of particular relevance to this strategy.
- 3.3** Outreach by the Employment Team during the pandemic reached 1,080 customers who had been in touch with the team in the previous 18 months. This identified customer needs as regards job losses and opportunities. For example, more customers took up employment opportunities to meet an immediate need for income but remain in contact with the team to identify vacancies offering more secure terms or conditions, more hours or work nearer to home.
- 3.4** Regular consultation takes place with pantry members. Changes to the service such as a move away from pre-packed bags to offering choice and continuing with larger family bags after positive feedback from a trial over the Summer Holidays are some examples. A second Social Impact report on the pantries is due during 2020, which will illustrate the wider social value generated.
- 3.5** Targeted work with those who may experience disadvantage such as people with disabilities, from BAME communities, those with complex needs, and young people is vital in building strong, inclusive communities and reducing inequalities. Many of the social investments made by SHG are for projects which benefit the most marginalised amongst the customer base, such as rough sleepers, perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and long-term unemployed customers.
- 3.6** Customer insight is a valuable tool to ensure social investment resources are focussed on projects and areas which are a priority for customers. For example, in recognition of customer insight around the Mottram Street and Lancashire Hill neighbourhoods, SHG has created Vision2020, a holistic approach to neighbourhood support in those two areas. Teams from across SHG and partners are investing resources in the area to reduce ASB, identify and offer appropriate support to more households who may be struggling and increase engagement.
- 3.7** SHG has a well-resourced and successful community development approach, providing a wide range of support to the wider civil society sector in Stockport. This includes a dedicated Funding Officer who is in regular contact with over 133 groups in local neighbourhoods, helping them to meet their identified local needs through securing external funding for social investment. SHG's own Community Fund forms part of this offer, with a customer panel making decisions on which bids to support. Monitoring funding bids provides useful insight around community activity in an area, as well as identifying local needs and key community champions to work with around other social investment projects.
- 3.8** A consultation session with the Customer Scrutiny Panel revealed customers are not always aware of the wide range of social investment projects delivered

by SHG, or how to access the opportunities to benefit themselves or their communities. There was strong support for the objectives identified which were felt to be in line with customer views of what SHG should be prioritising. An additional action was included following the feedback around greater publicity of opportunities to customers.

4 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Six principles underpin the objectives and delivery of the Social Investment Strategy:

- A place based, tailored approach to working with communities
- Always using customer/community insight and evidence to inform decision making
- Partnership working to maximise positive outcomes, including through procurement
- Proactively seek external funding sources and resources for all projects, to maximise outcomes from SHG's social investment
- Adopting a sustainable LIFE model to projects
- Using ASPIRE values to ensure social investment decisions are ambitious, innovative and delivered to an excellent standard.

Where SHG has a concentration of homes in a neighbourhood (for example Brinnington, Offerton, Adswold/Bridgehall) it will seek to be the lead agency in delivering social investment, providing a dynamic and ambitious approach in line with its aims and ASPIRE¹⁷ values. On some themes where partners have more expertise than SHG, for example health, social investment will be directed to support partners most in touch with local communities.

Social investment is at the core of SHG's work. In addition to the Management Fee investment in customers and communities, many added value services are covered through external funding. This includes the surplus generated by collection of water rates, external grant funding and tenders. For example, Motiv8, Rough Sleeper Initiative and Move On Fund, all bring income into SHG and Foundations to ensure SHG can spread the benefits of investment as far as possible. More recently, Gift Aid from ThreeSixty to Foundations Stockport has provided a significant financial contribution, combined with more emphasis on income generating opportunities, such as sales of high value items donated to the furniture recycling project

This Strategy outlines the ambitions for these services going forward. Many will need additional funding to continue their development. The fifth objective in this Strategy ensures any new social investment opportunities are evaluated and delivered on a strong financial footing, with a clear understanding of the cost to SHG and a long term sustainable plan for sourcing funding.

¹⁷ Ambition, Social responsibility, Passion, Innovation, Respect, Excellence

4.1 OBJECTIVE ONE: DELIVER A STRONG EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS OFFER

SHG's aim is to be the leading source of high-quality employment and skills support in the Borough. The Employment Team will continue supporting customers who face particular barriers to accessing work, whilst also enabling recently unemployed customers to access growth areas of the regional economy, such as green and digital jobs.

Young people will be a particular focus, as they have been disproportionately impacted by the recent economic downturn. External funding will be sourced to maximise resources, such as the Kickstart scheme for 16-24 year-olds, and placements through the social value aspect of procurement as well as opportunities identified at 4.2 and in the People & OD Strategy.

Over 50s have been a long-term focus through the Motiv8 project, and it is clear some people in this age group who have until now been in well paid, long term employment, have unexpectedly found themselves out of work due to the pandemic. Specific support will be tailored to this cohort, recognising particular needs around identifying transferable skills to move into new sectors of the economy.

Enhancing digital skills will also be a priority, as these have a significant impact on access to better paid employment opportunities, as well as offering financial benefits from many 'internet only' services and deals. This supports the digital agenda for both GM, "*We want GM to be a place where a lack of digital skills is never a barrier to social mobility and employment*"¹⁸, and Stockport Council "*...digital is needed to improve quality of life and enhance opportunities in education and employment*". Skills, equipment and connectivity will be the three areas of focus for digital work.

Objective One actions:

- Restructure the employment offer to simultaneously support customers who face multiple barriers to accessing employment and those who are newly unemployed with more skills.
- Deliver a bespoke offer to young people, including hosting a Youth Hub in Cornerstone led by the DWP and delivering high quality work experience placements in house and via procurement opportunities.
- Deliver a bespoke offer to older job seekers, both those already within the Motiv8 priority groups and those newly unemployed.
- Proactively bid for and maximise external funding sources and use these to increase the number of local people who can be supported into training and employment.

¹⁸ The Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint, GMCA January 2020

- Substantially develop the online employment and training offer to enable more residents to access support remotely at a time which suits them.
- Increase the number of working age participants completing literacy and digital skills training in their communities to enhance employment prospects and life skills.
- Support customers without digital devices and connectivity to access externally funded schemes operating in the Borough and to secure funding aimed at individuals facing disadvantage.
- Offer targeted support to groups facing particular disadvantage accessing employment, such as refugees, those with disabilities and looked after children.
- Ensure employment-related social investment and social value in the People & OD Strategy 2018-21 and the Equality & Diversity Strategy 2018-21 are measured and reported as part of this Strategy.

Objective One Outcome: A tailored employment and skills offer which has a positive impact for local people, enhancing their skills and securing sustainable employment.

4.2 OBJECTIVE TWO: BOOST ASPIRATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Many young people living in SHG' neighbourhoods face challenges to achieving their true potential, starting school without the necessary skills to thrive, attaining less well at school than their more affluent peers and having low aspirations for their future. Their life chances can therefore be constrained from an early age if effective interventions are not put in place.

Whilst recognising more specialist partners such as Stockport Family may take the lead in addressing some of these issues, SHG has a vested interest in ensuring these young people make positive choices and thrive within their communities. Delivery of these actions should lead to increased attainment at school, although it is difficult to attribute this specifically to SHG interventions.

Only 46% of Free School Meal eligible children achieve a good level of development (school readiness measure) at the end of Reception, which reduces their social mobility and life chances. SHG will continue to contribute towards the Councils' Start Well strategy to support school readiness outcomes for early years children. This will include a commitment to the EPEC¹⁹ parenting programme. For school aged children, mental resilience will be the focus for work in schools, which includes both the workshops delivered in term time and the holiday clubs targeted at schools with large catchments from SHG neighbourhoods. The age groups transitioning between primary and secondary school (years 5-8) will be a priority.

Resources for youth work with secondary age and above (to age 25) will be invested in targeting vulnerable young people at risk of failing to achieve their potential, some of whom may need support to avoid being exploited and falling into offending behaviour. A proactive approach will be taken to tackling youth nuisance through positive partnership working with key agencies such as the Youth Offending Service and Life Leisure to put a range of appropriate and effective programmes in place.

Care leavers often face immense challenges in early life and need additional support to maximise their potential. SHG is committed to meeting GM wide pledges to ensure they can access stable accommodation, develop the life skills in order to thrive and access employment and training opportunities.

Objective Two actions:

- Proactively engage with young people at risk of causing youth nuisance, offending or exploitation through a range of effective diversionary work and partnerships to encourage positive life choices.
- Secure external funding to expand SHG's staff resources available for youth work to better meet the needs of young people.
- Deliver evidence-based sessions in schools to improve mental resilience amongst vulnerable young people to improve their self-esteem and confidence, with a particular focus around transition from primary to secondary school.
- Support Stockport Family priorities around school readiness and the provision of early help through programmes such as Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC)²⁰ and Hungry 4 Fun (formerly known as Holiday Kitchen).
- Prioritise work in schools based on evidence of need from place-based working, and non-mainstream school such as Pupil Referral Units.
- Lead on delivery of targeted school holiday provision to deliver stimulating activities to vulnerable children, young people and families to address holiday hunger, ensuring this is inclusive to all groups including BAME²¹, SEND²² and LAC²³ young people.
- Create effective ways for young people to give their views on SHG services, leading to a greater representation of young people in decision making.
- Ensure pledges made around care leavers are delivered with partners.

²⁰ Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities is a peer led parenting programme which recruits, trains and supports local parents to deliver parenting programmes in their local communities

²¹ Black Asian and Minority Ethnic

²² Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

²³ Looked After Children, i.e. children in the care of the local authority

Objective Two Outcome:

Engagement with SHG projects leads to increased resilience, aspirations and attainment amongst children and young people to improve their life chances.

4.3 OBJECTIVE THREE - PROMOTE POSITIVE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING IN COMMUNITIES

SHG is committed to playing a greater role in reducing the Borough's health inequalities. Having regular access to households experiencing some of the poorest health outcomes in the borough puts SHG in a unique position to support its health partners to improve life expectancy and reduce health inequalities. The Covid-19 pandemic has placed particular pressure on health partners, temporarily stalling progress towards SHG's integration into, and influence on, strategic local decision making. SHG will continue to pursue this goal through social investment in health initiatives which align with wider Borough priorities.

Mental wellbeing is the focus of the majority of SHG's social investment. This forms a core part of many services including Temporary Accommodation, Housing Options, Housing Support and the TPA. It includes practical support with maintaining a tenancy, signposting and accompanying customers to more specialist health services, as well as referrals to the SHG free counselling service for tenants.

Work around physical health has been more limited to date, focussing mainly on promoting public health initiatives, partnering with agencies such as Life Leisure to deliver sports activities and supporting community groups to secure funding for locally based activities. Support is also given to delivery of Stockport Council's Active Communities Strategy. The benefits of access to safe, clean and accessible public and communal greenspaces are set out in the SHG Greenspace Strategy. It is recognised SHG should play a more significant role in reducing physical health inequalities, as set out in the actions below.

Stockport has an older population than the national average and SHG tenants have an older profile still. Actions to ensure more people are supported to stay well and live at home for as long as possible are covered in SHG's Age Friendly Strategy 2018-21.

Objective Three Actions:

- Secure external funding to support positive mental health amongst younger people through specialist counselling and resilience, working with partner agencies such as HEART and TLC.
- Reprocurer the counselling service during 2021 to maximise positive outcomes for customers and value for money.

- Proactively support local wellbeing groups working with minority communities to access funding for their initiatives.
- Make a strong contribution to the GM health agenda through the GMHP groups to ensure the voice of Stockport residents is heard in policy development, including the GM Mental Health Strategy 2021.
- Enhance SHG's role in local health strategy by re-establishing professional networks and promoting the strong health offer to partners.
- Use evidence from place-based approaches to work in partnership with local communities to improve physical and mental health.
- Deliver a modern, high quality Extra Care Scheme for older people at Edinburgh Close
- Explore potential opportunities for inclusion of age/dementia friendly initiatives in sheltered/extra care/general needs environments
- Continue to influence and contribute to the council's All Age Living prospectus with specific reference to the Living Well at Home and Technology Enabled Living workstreams

Objective Three Outcome:

SHG customers report increased physical and mental wellbeing as a result of engagement with activities delivered and/or supported by SHG.

4.4 OBJECTIVE FOUR: IMPROVE FINANCIAL WELLBEING THROUGH TIMELY SUPPORT AND SELF HELP

Many SHG customers experiencing financial difficulties are supported through a flexible offer including money advice, furniture packages, energy advice and affordable food. Whilst a small number of households could be described as destitute, requiring significant input such as gifted furniture and food bank referrals, most are in a position to contribute towards the support either financially or through taking certain actions themselves. This objective aims to encourage self-help where possible, to reduce dependency and increase resilience, enabling more resources to be directed towards those in most need.

For example, a tiered pricing system within the Foundations furniture offer provides affordable household items for a small fee to those who can contribute, partly offsetting the cost of the items which are gifted. The Foundations Your Local Pantry model is entirely based on self-help through its membership scheme, which allows local people who are struggling financially to access a choice of food and volunteering opportunities for a small weekly membership fee.

Feedback from the Money Advice team Covid survey indicates many of their customers would be happy to move towards a model of self-help with support, rather than reliance on SHG staff to act on their behalf. This will reduce telephone and face to face interactions, again allowing resources to be redirected towards those least able to help themselves. The findings mirror

those found by Stockport Council when consulting on the transition from SLAS²⁴ to the Support Funds.

Objective Four Actions:

- Deliver the furniture business plan, including implement a clear tiered pricing system for the furniture offer which encourages customers to pay towards their items wherever possible. This will generate revenue for the project which can then be reinvested to help more households in need.
- Expand and diversify the Your Local Pantry network in partnership with local communities, responding to local needs and piloting new models of delivery such as the mobile pantry and community operated pantries.
- Strengthen links with reactive food poverty schemes such as food banks to encourage self-help as a long-term solution once the immediate need has been met.
- Deliver a comprehensive learning package around cookery and healthy eating to promote better mental and physical health and make more of household budgets.
- Deliver model of money advice which provides more information and guidance online through a range of media for common issues.
- Strengthen SHG's internal links to ensure a holistic approach to self-help, ensuring high levels of staff knowledge about customers and services between teams such as Tenancy Ready, Employment, Furniture and Money Advice.
- Support the growth of Stockport Credit Union to enable customers to access affordable credit and accumulate savings which will facilitate self-help in times of financial crisis.

Objective Four Outcome:

More customers use self-help options such as digital and make a financial contribution where possible, reducing dependency and allowing services to be more sustainable.

5 OBJECTIVE FIVE – DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO SOCIAL INVESTMENT

SHG will monitor its social investments at a corporate level and ensure they are sustainable by maximising the contribution from external funding.

SHG has a well-established approach to measuring social value. There are particular opportunities to increase the social value secured from procurement, by providing clear priorities to contract managers when negotiating with suppliers. The GM Social Value Strategy launched in November 2020 (as

²⁴ Stockport Local Assistance Scheme provided a safety net for households facing serious hardship. In September 2020, this changed to Support Funds, with a reduced budget and greater reliance on self-help.

mentioned at 2.6) and the development of new measurement tools in the sector will be reviewed to ensure this approach remains the most appropriate for SHG. The social value generated by specific projects will be used to guide future SHG investment decisions to ensure a strong contribution to its mission of *'transforming lives'*.

Objective five actions:

- Quantify SHG's social investment as outlined in Appendix 1, enabling indicators to be developed such as percentage of turnover invested in communities. This will better highlight how social investment is core to the business and makes a strong contribution to SHG is meeting its mission and aims.
- Review new and developing measurement tools, such as the HACT Social Value Bank^[1] to identify any benefits to SHG's approach to social value and retain links to the GM Social Value Strategy.
- Review the social value guidance for contract managers to reflect the new GM Social Value Strategy and the aims of the Greater Manchester Housing Providers.
- Where services are brought in house, ensure social value remains a component part of service delivery.
- Ensure all opportunities for customer to engage with social investment projects for their own or community benefit are widely and regularly publicised in a variety of formats and to a range of statutory and community partners.

Objectives Five outcome:

SHG will have a robust and comprehensive approach to measuring its social investment decisions. This will enable informed decisions to be made about future investment and demonstrate the delivery of its mission to be "*One team, transforming lives*". SHG's approach to measuring social value will reflect best practice whilst making best use of resources.

6 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

- 6.1** An EIA assessment has been undertaken. This highlighted the additional barriers faced by disabled people accessing employment and the increase incidence of poverty amongst households with disabled people. As a result, the needs of these groups have been emphasised in both the context and objectives. BAME communities can also experience difficulties, especially refugee households whose previous qualifications and experience may not be recognised. This has been acknowledged by reference to targeted work with groups already supporting these communities. The needs of young people, especially around education and employment, have also been identified as requiring additional support in Objective 2.

^[1] Housing Association Charitable Trust,

7 LINKS TO STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

7.1 This Strategy links to several other SHG Strategies and Policies:

- Customer Access Strategy
- People & OD Strategy
- Customer Voice & Influence Strategy
- Delivery Plan
- Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Funding Strategy
- Marketing and Communications Strategy
- Value for Money Strategy
- Age Friendly Strategy
- Greenspace Strategy

7.2 It is also linked to Stockport Council Strategies around Place Based Integration, Local Plans, and All Age Living.

8 ACTION PLAN

8.1 All actions within this Strategy have been developed into an action plan attached at Appendix Two. Targets for each outcome will be identified and reported.

9 OWNERSHIP, MONITORING AND REVIEW

9.1 The Strategy will be monitored by a Social Investment Steering Group. An annual impact assessment will be reported to Board and customers, highlighting outcomes and achievements.

10 RECOMMENDATION

10.1 That Member Committee note the Social Investment Strategy.