



## Delivery Plan Outcomes 2020/21



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## **Executive summary**

Stockport Homes Group (SHG) delivered the objectives set for it by the Council in 2020/21 and contributed significantly to wellbeing in the Borough. It adapted to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and many services were operating at pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year. Support services recognised the immediate and potential long-term effects of the pandemic and provided additional levels of service. The Your Local Pantry Service, for example, changed the way it operated by delivering packages directly to people's homes and processing referrals from the Council's Coronavirus helpline. Similarly, the Customer Finance Service provided money advice and supported customers applying for Universal Credit. In many cases customers had not made benefits application before and the advice enabled customers to navigate the application process.

SHG worked to deliver high service levels during the pandemic. It ensured that there were sector-leading levels of gas servicing compliance during the year and achieved 100 per cent compliance at year-end. The compliance levels are a positive result given that many customers were shielding or self-isolating at points throughout the year, but it reflects SHG's effective compliance management and the trust it has with customers. Similarly, rent collection and arrears measures had returned to pre-lockdown performance levels towards the end of the year despite the challenges of the pandemic, its impact on customer finances, and the associated need for more customers needing to navigate the benefits system for the first time. The ASB Service made proactive contact with victims and survivors of domestic abuse during the first lockdown, on the guidance of Stockport Without Abuse, and over 900 residents were supported into work, education or volunteering during the year despite a difficult jobs market.

The Government launched a Social Housing White Paper in December 2020, which contained wide-ranging implications for the regulatory environment of social housing providers. SHG has worked to understand the requirements, creating an action plan and implementing changes such as adopting a new Customer Feedback Policy and engaging the Council on new obligations for landlords.

The growth in the Group's business contributes to sustaining Stockport's neighbourhoods. Its charitable subsidiary company, Foundations Stockport, delivered a range of support services and attracted external funding into the Borough. Its Three Sixty company successfully delivered the Council's housing capital programme and continued to seek out and secure external business. Its 'Viaduct' subsidiary continued to work in partnership with the Council to meet housing need through new build.

SHG enhanced both its and the Council's reputation at regional and national levels during the last year; taking a leading role among the Greater Manchester Housing Providers and remaining at the forefront of good practice by winning several awards for its pioneering approaches.

SHG and its subsidiaries continue to deliver against Council and customer priorities including promoting Stockport and contributing to its one team approach.

## **Background**

This is the final outcomes report for the Delivery Plan covering the five-year period from 2016 to 2021. A new Delivery Plan has been approved that covers the five-year period from 2021-2026. Outcomes reports on the new plan will begin following the end of the first year of that period, i.e. 2022.

SHG is made up of four companies:

- the parent company, SHG, manages housing and a range of other neighbourhood and support services on behalf of Stockport Council;
- its development company, Viaduct Partnerships, builds new homes with the Council through the 'Viaduct Housing Partnership';
- Three Sixty delivers large scale capital works to the Council's stock at a competitive rate and engages in commercial works to earn income; and
- its charitable company, Foundations Stockport, bids for external grant funding and seeks new opportunities. Several operational services that link to the aims of the charity are located within the company, including Motiv8, Your Local Pantries and the Furniture Recycling Service.

The relationship between the Council and SHG is governed by a long-term Management Agreement. This is based on five-yearly Delivery Plans, a range of strategic liaison meetings where the two organisations discuss shared objectives and several task and finish groups. The current Plan runs from 2016-21 and this is the final annual report back on performance against it. A new Delivery Plan has been created for the period 2021-26. It was approved by the SHG Board in March 2021 and by the Council in April 2021.

A number of challenges have had an impact on SHG and the Council since the 2016-21 Delivery Plan was first agreed. These include Covid-19, reductions in Council resources, housing affordability pressures, the long-term impact of an ageing population and increases in homelessness. In addition, several political factors have changed the landscape, such as Welfare and Public Sector Reforms. SHG has worked with the Council to address the various challenges faced in recent years, and to take advantage of opportunities that have been generated, for example by the Council's proactive approach to town centre regeneration.

The current Plan was originally based on SHG's aims as they stood in the winter of 2015/16. These were updated when the ALMO established its group structure the following year and the plan was jointly reviewed during 2018/19, alongside the Council's review of its Housing Strategy.

## **SHG's objectives**

**Group Mission:**  
**One team - transforming lives**

**Group Aims:**

- **Be accountable to customers**
- **Be a great place to work**
- **Maximise efficiency**
- **Reduce inequalities**
- **Build strong, collaborative relationships**
- **Improve the environment**

**Group Values:**

- **Ambition** – we have the ambition and courage to challenge; translating this into commercial success and brilliant customer outcomes
- **Social responsibility** – we always try to do the right thing; using our role as a service provider, employer and buyer to generate trust, build our communities and empower our people
- **Passion** – we have a passion for what we do; with positive, motivated and enthusiastic staff who enjoy their work
- **Innovation** – we are innovative in everything we do; with the agility, creativity and edge to keep defying expectations and delivering fresh and exciting things
- **Respect** – we treat each other with respect; supporting and inspiring one another and collaborating across teams and partnerships
- **Excellence** – we continually improve how we work; challenging the status quo, learning from what goes well and always being professional

These support the delivery of the Council's five-year Housing Strategy 2016-21, which prioritises:

- Investing in growth: increasing housing supply, choice and affordability;
- Regenerating neighbourhoods – place making, strong communities;
- Housing choices: supporting independent living;
- Improving quality in the private sector; and
- Making the best use of affordable housing stock.

And its Corporate Plan, which has the following goals:

- People are able to make positive choices and be independent and for those who need support to get it;
- Stockport benefits from a thriving economy;

- Stockport is a place people want to live;
- Communities in Stockport will be safe, resilient and inclusive

## **Delivering the aims**

Below are details of how SHG has delivered its aims during the past twelve months. It recognises that, although this has been a successful year, there are always areas for improvement. On this basis, each section ends with some reflection about lessons learned during the year and opportunities that will be taken to do things differently in future.

For ease of reference, Appendix One maps SHG's key achievements against the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan.

### ***Aim One - Be accountable to customers***

The Covid-19 pandemic presented challenges to the way services were delivered during the year, particularly where processes were subject to social distancing requirements. Relets times, for example, were affected by the requirement for works to be completed sequentially rather than having multiple operatives in a property at the same time. However, services adapted to meet those challenges and many areas were operating at pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year. The repairs service, for example, was completing routine and emergency repairs at year-end that reflected pre-pandemic volumes. Similarly, the ability to manage health and safety compliance indicators, such as gas safety certificates, was maintained while taking account of customers that were classed as clinically vulnerable or shielding. Where certification was not possible a risk-based approach was undertaken, and new appointments rescheduled. This has resulted in full compliance on statutory health and safety compliance indicators at year-end.

Other services have met the challenge of Covid-19 with improved levels of performance and service delivery. The Pantry Service has adapted to customer needs by changing the way it delivers goods during the pandemic, with 2,792 deliveries direct to customer homes. The ASB Service made proactive contact with victims and survivors of domestic abuse from the six months prior to the pandemic, on the guidance of Stockport Without Abuse. Satisfaction with the outcomes of antisocial behaviour (ASB) cases averaged 99.6 per cent and satisfaction with the outcomes of repairs that could be competed was 99.7 per cent and, both of which are exceptionally high. Estate inspections indicated that 98.8 per cent of neighbourhoods were maintained to a good or excellent standard. The effect of the pandemic on the financial situation of customers was recognised and support was provided through services such as money advice, which has assisted customers applying for Universal Credit. The rents service has worked closely with customers to provide support, with rent collection and arrears indicators remaining positive during the year. Customer satisfaction remained high during the year, with customers expressing 98.4 per cent satisfaction with SHG as a landlord and 97.6 per cent with the quality of their homes.

These outcomes evidence SHG's ongoing commitment to listening to and supporting customers throughout the pandemic.

The Government launched 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper' in December 2020. The White Paper aims to ensure that

social housing residents have positive experiences in their communities, in their homes, and with their landlord and introduces a new seven-point Charter that will be enforced through the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards. The White Paper builds on the Government's commitment on building safety, its funding of affordable housing, and to encouraging home ownership. SHG discussed the implications of the White Paper at its Wider Leadership Team and Board in early 2021 and developed an action plan based on the proposals. In many cases SHG is already meeting the requirements because it has a good record of investing in areas such as fire safety, property maintenance, customer engagement, complaints management, and neighbourhoods. However, there are new and additional requirements in the White Paper and SHG has taken steps to make changes to meet new requirements where details are available. It approved a new Customer Feedback Policy in December 2020 to meet obligations in the White Paper and a linked Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice for example. SHG is in dialogue with the Council about new responsible, accountable and designated person requirements and developing an assurance framework to set out how those responsibilities can be met. It will continue to understand and implement changes as details emerge.

The following table shows initial benchmarking positions and the baseline number of organisations, from those organisations whose data had been released by 1 June 2021. Stockport Homes compares very well against both ALMOs and in wider comparison against all housing providers. Performance is in the top quartile for most of the indicators, where quartile information is available. Stockport Homes is the top performing housing organisation for re-let times, void rent loss and ASB satisfaction. There are two indicators where Stockport Homes' performance was outside the top quartile. Rent collection performance appears low compared with other ALMOs and housing providers, however, this is typical of organisations with low rent arrears. Stockport Homes performs well for rent arrears in comparison to other ALMOs, however, performance fell just outside of the top quartile of all housing providers, partly due to the small number of organisations who had submitted their data by 1 June.

Benchmarking results at 01.06.21	Performance	All ALMOs		All Housing Providers	
		Position	Base	Position	Base
Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate	100%	<b>1st<sup>1</sup></b>	6	<b>1st<sup>2</sup></b>	35
Satisfaction with ASB case outcome	99.62%	<b>1st</b>	3	<b>1st</b>	9
Satisfaction with repairs	98.66%	<b>1st<sup>3</sup></b>	3	<b>2nd<sup>4</sup></b>	25
Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed (excluding arrears brought forward)	99.41%	<b>6th</b>	6	<b>27th</b>	32
Rent arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rental debit	2.01%	<b>2nd</b>	6	<b>10th</b>	33

<sup>1</sup> 2 of out 6 ALMOs whose data was released by 01.06.21 achieved 100 per cent

<sup>2</sup> 16 of out 35 organisations whose data was released by 01.06.21 achieved 100 per cent

<sup>3</sup> Joint first with one other ALMO at 01.06.21

<sup>4</sup> Joint second with one other organisation at 01.06.21

Percentage of rent lost through dwellings being vacant	0.32%	<b>1st</b>	6	<b>1st</b>	33
Average time taken to re-let empty dwellings (all re-lets)	11.18 days	<b>1st</b>	6	<b>1st</b>	27
Repairs completed at the first visit	96.01%	<b>1st</b>	5	<b>8th</b> <sup>5</sup>	30
Percentage of calls answered	95.24%	<b>2nd</b>	5	<b>5th</b> <sup>6</sup>	23
Average number of sick days per employee	5.07 days	<b>1st</b>	6	<b>5th</b>	29

SHG's core services are consistently at the forefront of best practice. In 2020/21 there were several recognised achievements:

- TPAS and Inside Housing Magazine awarded SHG for its continued dedication to engaging and communicating with tenants around building safety issues.
- Front line services for customers have been recognised and highly commended regionally and nationally including; ASB Services, Repairs, Employment services and Energy services.
- For the twelfth consecutive year SHG retained the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation, demonstrating the continued dedication to delivering the highest standards of service to customers, and the annual review highlighted several areas of 'compliance plus' scores which are used nationally as best practice.
- The Health and Safety of customers and colleagues remains a key priority, and SHG were awarded the 'ROSPA' Gold level award. It benchmarks safety performance year on year, ensuring consistent performance and demonstrates the ongoing commitment to raising health and safety standards.
- Winner in the 'North West Construction Safety Awards'.
- Winners in the 2020 "Resident Safety campaign" competition organised by Inside Housing, for their partnership with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government and other housing providers to make sure that residents views and knowledge are at the forefront of any fire safety plans and communications.
- 'Best place to work' in the Employee Experience Awards and UK Business Awards,
- 'Business of the year' and winner of the 'Community and Social Responsibility' award by the Greater Manchester Business Awards

The accolades illustrate how SHG has listened to what its customers want and demonstrate the strength of its reputation for delivering.

Customers hold the organisation to account in a range of ways. They are involved in formulating policies and strategies, monitoring service delivery and working with staff to make spending decisions. Examples of this in 2020/21 included:

- Gaining views from customers during the Covid-19 pandemic to understand needs and requirement, which received over 1,000 responses.

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<sup>5</sup> Joint eighth with one other organisation at 01.06.21

<sup>6</sup> Joint fifth with one other organisation at 01.06.21

- Consulted on the aims of the new five-year Delivery Plan, which included a video that elicited a significant number of responses.
- The Investment Team consulted with the Customer Scrutiny Panel on the letters sent out to customers. The panel advised that they were happy with the letters, but suggested areas for improvement. The team have implemented changes based on the feedback from the panel.
- The Greenspace survey has been updated to include a question about customer involvement and keeping customers informed of changes. There have also been 50 customers added to the list to become a Green Inspector.
- Temporary accommodation customers provided feedback that contributed to a review of the Homelessness Strategy. Customers had said that information about accessing the service was confusing, so more work has been done to improve this, for example, working with partners to seek clarity for customers about how to access the service and apply for housing.
- The Customer Finance Team carried out a Covid-19 survey to gauge customers' views on changes made within the service, in which customers were transferred to self-serve payments due to office closure. Customers were satisfied with the self-serve option overall, however based on the feedback, the Customer Finance Team will be issuing more guidance to help customers and provide a range of options.
- As customers have expressed interest in knowing more about the mutual exchange service and available properties, current available properties will be advertised in the reception area. This will enable customers to see information about the properties and contact the Property Management team for more information if interested.
- The Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) reviewed two services: Programme Delivery and the One Number service during the year and made recommendations for further improvements. The Customer Monitoring Group meets three times per year to review corporate performance reports and financial reports. It provides comments, which are provided to the Councillors who monitor SHG's performance at its Member Committee.

Communities pulled together during the year with 26 mutual aid groups being set up in Stockport. SHG supported these with 'Team around the Place Captains' being a first point of contact for signposting, advice and help with funding applications. 'Team around the Place' supported partner agencies with funding bids to inequalities funds for Lancashire Hill and Offerton, ensuring residents' voices were included, bringing in £14,000 of funding to help residents to remain active or start to become more active. The number of new groups grew substantially, including FRESH (Food Ready Every School Holiday) which started as a small group but built up into making multiple funding bids and securing a van. Other groups such as 'WHY sports' changed their remit from sports provision to food provision, using donations from their followers to feed local people in need.

The Customer Engagement Service signposted residents to support and training so they kept connected with families and online services via the DigiKnow Alliance and Starting Point Digital Champions. The Offerton Community Café started an order and delivery service for older residents who had to shield and didn't have family living close by, which provided healthy, homemade low-cost meals. This was followed by offering a Sunday Roast for any resident within the Offerton and Great

Moor areas. The Activities Committee helped to supply activity kits to the community, along with both community cafes. These community cafes linked up with Your Local Pantry to provide homecooked, healthy meals for the pilot of their family offer during the summer school holidays. The Community Fund supported groups to take their activities online, such as OWLS and The Cherry Tree Project.

### *Opportunities to improve*

There are a number of areas where the organisation recognises that it can still do better. For example:

- The reviews carried out by the Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) resulted in managers taking action plans to the Board to address the CSP's recommendations. For example, the letters sent to customers in advance of major works starting in their area and following completion have been reviewed to improve the information given and remove ambiguities in the language.
- A new Customer Feedback Policy provides more flexibility to hear complaints at stage two, ensuring that complaints are resolved in a more timely manner, while ensuring the tenant voice is heard at each stage.

### **Aim Two - Be a great place to work**

Delivering excellent services to customers is only possible with an engaged and well-motivated employee team. Strong 'Colleague Voice' groups represent people from across the business and are key to planning activities like the annual colleague festival, ASPIRE Awards and Charity of Choice activities. Last year Colleague Voice shaped policies on SHG's health cash plan, recruitment and selection, and new ways of working. Alongside the colleague voice groups there are three colleague diversity groups focused around Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), disability and LGBT themes. The groups provide a space for team members to share experiences, celebrate diversity and promote inclusion, and contribute to the development of plans, processes and strategies.

SHG was recognised again by 'Best Companies' and 'Investors in People' in 2020 as a role model organisation where people want to work. The Sunday Times named it Britain's number one 'not for profit' and a 'Three Star – World Class' employer. The Top 100 Lists were announced for 2021, naming SHG as the 'Top Housing Organisation to Work For' alongside 33<sup>rd</sup> place in the 'Large Organisations' list and 28th in the 'North West' Regional lists. SHG has retained the accreditation for the 13<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, which demonstrates the long-term commitment to colleague experience and engagement. These judgements are based on responses from an independently run, confidential team member survey so they reflect the views of people who are delivering services. The ALMO also retained its Investors in People Platinum accreditation and Health and Wellbeing Award for commitment to people development.

There was a continuation in 2020/21 of SHG's commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of team members, recognising the impact that the pandemic could have on issues such as psychological wellbeing. SHG developed a forward plan of activities to support colleagues during this time, including utilisation of the Active Listeners and Employee Assistance schemes, undertaking dedicated welfare calls to priority team members, weekly hints and tips in SHG's online newsletter and

additional resilience, mental health and suicide awareness. It resulted in 582 course attendances and 1856 learning and support hours.

The GROW<sup>7</sup> framework for developing the workforce continued to offer opportunities for colleagues to enhance their skills and knowledge. There are several pathways on the scheme. Utilising a hybrid approach to delivery SHG was able to continue to support the Professional Development Pathway, which gives team members access to qualifications ranging from Level Two to Level Seven, and the Facilitator pathway, which upskills individuals to develop and facilitate workshops for colleagues, and the Progression Pathway which supports Leadership Development. In addition, the GAP mentoring program and Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) mentoring program supports professional development with SHG a participant in the scheme in 2020/21.

SHG's approach to offering apprenticeships once again demonstrated its commitment to providing development opportunities and ensuring they are high quality jobs that make staff want to stay with the organisation. SHG employed 15 apprenticeships during the year each of which was paid at least the 'Living Wage Foundation' level rather than an apprentice rate. The apprenticeships were 18 months long, six months longer than 'standard' placements. The extended placements ensure that the apprentices have time to develop the skills they need to move on to permanent jobs and benefit from the 'move on' support it offers. Of the 15 apprentices, two have won external awards for their achievements and another two have received internal awards for the commitment to their roles. Over the last five years a further 33 apprentices have been employed, of whom 13 went on to permanent jobs within SHG and 16 with other employers, with only four leaving before completing the apprenticeship.

Last year saw SHG employ one graduate apprentice to carry out short term projects and support current SHG initiatives. The projects supported the graduate to become job ready while providing the organisation with valuable research work. The work focused on energy efficiency, fuel poverty and the energy advice service.

SHG is a Stonewall Diversity Champion organisation. This recognises its commitment to supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, Questioning and Intersex people in the workplace and to developing services to customers that are LGBT+. A dedicated LGBT+ staff forum ensures SHG understands and values its LGBT+ communities, provides places where LGBT+ people choose to live, work and socialise and takes an interest in access and service delivery issues for customers.

SHG is committed to ensuring equality and diversity in its workforce. In 2020/21 the percentage of BAME staff rose from 8.1 to 8.7 per cent and its median gender pay gap stands at 9.4 per cent<sup>8</sup>, the same as the percentage for the previous year. The 2020 Gender Pay Gap demonstrated that there is strong gender segregation in some roles. This trend is unchanged in the 2021 data which confirms that the roles that have a female gender bias at SHG still tend to fall in the lower quartiles, where

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<sup>7</sup> GROW is the working title given to all learning, personal and career development activity across SHG

<sup>8</sup> The median pay for women is £13.63 and for men it is £12.35

those with a male gender bias tend to have higher median pay. This trend is reflected nationally. SHG it is part of a Greater Manchester Housing Providers research project 'Generating Routes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Leadership'<sup>9</sup> which is developing ideas for improving diversity and includes a BAME mentoring programme of which SHG is a participant for mentors and mentees.

Corporate social responsibility is central to SHG's culture and helps motivate its team members, who embrace opportunities to 'give something back'. For example, team members raised £20,454 for MQ, which is SHG's Charity of Choice, and did 6,516 hours of volunteering for local causes last year this included; vaccine marshalling, the distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), supporting our local pantries and supporting local helplines.

SHG's flexible approach to managing attendance resulted in positive results on staff sickness, which is a key performance indicator. Only 5.07 days were lost per employee during the year, compared to an ambitious 6.25 day target, reflecting the commitment and resilience of staff to provide service to customers, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### *Opportunities to improve*

There are several areas where the organisation recognises that it can still do better. For example:

- There is a lack of BAME representation at manager and senior grades. Actions are included in the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-24 to effect change, including a guaranteed interview scheme for BAME candidates that meet appointment criteria.
- The colleague diversity network groups will each be supported by a senior sponsor and be provided with practical support to improve the voice under-represented groups have at SHG.
- In order to support the actions in relation to the Social Housing White Paper SHG is committed to translating the 'professional standards' and 'building safety competencies' into their People and Organisation Development approaches.
- To support future growth and diversity of SHG, a new People and Organisational Development Strategy is being developed for the next three years. It will focus on key priorities including; new ways of working (Maximising our Potential), digital, and colleague experience.
- SHG is committed to the health and wellbeing of its team members and it will pledge to develop one in every ten members to be qualified 'active listeners' to support colleague mental health.

#### **Aim Three - Maximise efficiency**

A strong value for money ethos exists within SHG. It makes best use of resources by generating efficiencies, bidding for external funding and channelling income into service delivery, based on priorities agreed with customers. Many efficiencies are non-cashable and are translated directly into service improvements.

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<sup>9</sup> in association Manchester Metropolitan University

Efficiencies of 5.91 per cent of the revenue budget were generated in 2020/21.

Some examples include:

- providing a furniture re-use service that supports tenancy sustainment, saving £94,113;
- Early engagement with customers that are experiencing financial difficulties, reducing court actions and saving £30,000;
- Taking a positive engagement approach to anti-social behaviour, reducing the need for legal action and saving £191,000;
- Renegotiating fixed wire testing costs, saving £21,400;
- Reducing the cost per unit of biomass fuel, saving £30,700;
- Supported 71 “in need” households to move via mutual exchange scheme rather than creating a void property, saving £178,000.

SHG considers that efficiency is about delivering ‘more for less’ but this does not always mean making a cash saving. During 2020/21 it has continued to develop its approach to procurement, using standard documentation for tender scoring, which provides consistency for suppliers and staff when they consider social value requirements. It has linked those requirements to service delivery such as employment support initiatives. SHG’s involvement with a group of housing providers from across Greater Manchester has continued during the year. It has continued to take a lead on data collection and analysis for the group and it has taken a co-lead role on the Group’s communication plan. This has raised the profile of social housing providers across the region and celebrated the delivery of social value outcomes.

SHG has a strong commitment to safeguarding public assets. Its housing fraud initiative, for example, helps to ensure that people in the greatest housing need can access social housing by making best use of its asset base. In 2020/21, SHG prevented 20 Right to Buy bids moving beyond the application stage, potentially preventing the loss of public assets worth £2,962,291.60<sup>10</sup>. SHG also recovered 16 properties following investigations into fraudulent use. This is a potential saving of £372,000<sup>11</sup>. In addition, SHG prevented two fraudulent applicants from obtaining social housing, potentially saving £6,480<sup>12</sup>. These cases have all been handled by internal resources without incurring external court costs.

SHG’s subsidiary companies were set up to maximise income, protect core services and help deliver the Council’s objectives in the most focussed and cost-effective way. In 2020/21:

- Viaduct Partnerships delivered the Group’s development programme efficiently. It completed 80 new homes for rent and 57 for shared ownership within the

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<sup>10</sup> Calculated using the average value of properties sold in 2020/21

<sup>11</sup> The Cabinet Office estimates a cost of £23,250 per property recovered based on annual costs of temporary accommodation, costs of recovery and re-letting. National Fraud Initiative Report 4 November 2016. Due to inflation this cost may be higher, however there has been no updated figure released

<sup>12</sup> Based on a calculation developed by the Cabinet Office due to annual costs of temporary accommodation, they estimate £3240 per application removed from the waiting list (National Fraud Initiative Report 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2018)

Borough during 2020/21, with a further 313 individual units under construction at the end of 2020/21. Viaduct Partnerships made tax efficiencies of £37,194 for the Group in 2020/21;

- Three Sixty delivered a significant proportion of the capital programme, with turnover of £4.5m and generating a £158,000 surplus that was gift-aided to Foundations, enabling more services to be delivered to local communities. To demonstrate value for money on the works, Three Sixty benchmarked costs to ensure its services are competitive, which is further demonstrated by Three Sixty's success in securing external contracts on price.
- Foundations had its second full year of trading, with a turnover of over £1.6 million, which helped it to deliver its charitable activities. Foundations also developed its first Business Plan, setting a clear framework for operations over the next five years.

SHG constantly reviews its structure to ensure it makes the best use of resources. In 2020/21 this included bringing together housing management and repairs services into an Operations Directorate to provide clearer oversight of complementary housing management and maintenance processes. In addition, a new Director of Foundations has been created to ensure the development of the charitable arm of SHG continues to grow, thrive and develop in line with the overall ambitions of SHG.

Wherever possible, SHG streamlines systems and processes to optimise use of resources. For example, it:

- Procured a new housing management system that will create a more efficient approach to data capture and usage. The system will begin to be developed in 2021, although it will take two years to become fully embedded and utilised.
- Introduced Microsoft 365 across all business areas to improve remote working, collaboration, and document and data management

In addition to maximising efficiencies, SHG has been very successful in attracting external funding. Its dedicated funding officer secured £532,804 of external grant and £505,487 of match funding to support a range of projects, including employment, community growing; digital inclusion; health and wellbeing; and environmental schemes. Similarly, it has delivered services to other organisations to generate income, for example the anti-social behaviour service installed noise monitoring equipment and CCTV on a contract basis.

A range of contracts were delivered to extend successful services delivered by SHG and partners. A funding extension was secured for the Targeted Prevention Alliance, the Alliance for Positive Relationships and the Wellbeing Independence Network, each of which runs to March 2022 with a full commission expected late 2021. Additional funding was previously secured for Motiv8, extending the service to early 2022, and following discussions with funders, further monies have been secured to extend delivery to early 2023.

SHG works to support the best use of resources across the Council's family of companies. For example, it provided energy management services to 46 local schools, which collectively spend over £1.37 million a year on energy. This allowed

them to benefit from its Energy Procurement Strategy, which typically results in tariffs of 11 per cent below the market average.

Projects where SHG was able to carry out work at a more competitive rate than commercial contractors and still make a small surplus improved value for money across the Council family. For example, Three Sixty successfully tendered for the fixed wire testing programme as a client for the Customer Safety Service, providing better value for money through better communications, open book reporting and investment back into the wider Group. In addition, Three Sixty successfully tendered for several disability adaptation projects for SHG with one project completed and three on-site during the year.

As a result of these activities, SHG Group achieved its financial targets during 2020/21.

#### *Opportunities to improve*

There are a number of areas where the organisation recognises that it can still do better. For example:

- Reviewing contract management processes to ensure that elements beyond the core service provision, such as social value or equality and diversity, are being delivered to ensure maximise benefit for SHG and its customers
- Reducing the number of independent IT systems through the roll-out of the single housing management system
- Implementing a new Value for Money Strategy, which aims to further embed value for money within the culture, method and decision-making at SHG.
- Undertaking benchmarking and comparison work to demonstrate the ongoing value for money of Three Sixty on capital programme works

#### **Aim Four - Reduce inequalities**

SHG continued its commitment to reducing inequalities in 2020/21. Its charitable company, Foundations Stockport, took on or continued the management of several new and existing projects, including the Motiv8 Service. Motiv8 works with people with complex needs that are most removed from the labour market, moving them towards education, job searching and employment. Your Local Pantries and the Furniture Recycling Service have also been transferred to Foundations Stockport, enabling the team to identify and explore additional sources of funding which were previously unavailable. Funding has also been secured from the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government to fund two Outreach roles working with Rough Sleepers across Stockport and Trafford. The charity's aims are:

- 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.

Several SHG advice services helped combat poverty among customers last year. For example:

- Energy Solutions Advisors carried out 645 new cases to give customers free and impartial advice on switching supplier, eligibility for government grants and winter payments. This saved customers £141,118, which includes warm homes discount and Charis grant payments, helping them get the most out of their low carbon appliances;
- 228 customers were supported to apply for savings on their water charges at an average annual saving of £180 per customer
- Money Advisors worked with 2,714 customers to help maximise their household incomes. They assisted with claims for new or additional benefits, challenging incorrect benefit decisions and applying for trust funds and grants. This resulted in £7.02m of additional income for customers.
- A team of specialist Money Advisors is in place, offering intensive support to all new Universal Credit (UC) claimants during the first six weeks of their claim. Support starts from the point of SHG being made aware of a new claim, to the claimant receiving their first UC payment.
- During 2019/20, the team supported 1,331 UC claimants, mainly as a result of being notified about new claims via the DWP Landlord Portal. All claimants are contacted initially by telephone, with a face-to-face appointment arranged if required. Out of the UC cases who engaged with the team, 87 per cent received their first payment and paid their rent as requested.

Since April 2020, Your Local Pantry has attracted 532 new members providing affordable groceries to an average membership of 374 households. 7,290 visits have been made across the five pantries, offering potential savings for members of £842 per household per year with total savings across the membership amounting to £120,285 in 2020/21.

A group of up to 29 community volunteers manage the day-to-day running of each Pantry. This includes taking deliveries and storing and rotating stock, completing opening and closing checks and supporting members with their weekly shop. During 2020/21, the pantries generated £73,109 of social value because of volunteering alone with 2,997 hours of volunteer time being committed. The Service changed the way it operated by delivering packages during the Covid-19 pandemic, delivering directly to people's homes and processing referrals from the Council's Coronavirus helpline. During the last 12 months, 18 volunteers have been recruited and supported through a comprehensive induction programme including training in manual handling and Food Hygiene Level two.

SHG supported customers to navigate the complex employment landscape in 2020/21 and it has supported 292 people into employment. In 2020/21, employment opportunities were greatly reduced in many entry-level sectors. The period between April to June 2020 was particularly challenging as several sectors completely stopped all recruitment and furloughed their staff. The team focused on supporting customers to identify transferrable skills and transition to sectors that were actively recruiting, proactively engaging local businesses to offer sector-based recruitment campaigns for those organisations with vacancies. Two such businesses from different sectors worked with SHG and 49 people participated in adapted virtual

sector-based events in 2020 with 20 people securing jobs through these campaigns. The team responded swiftly to customer needs and pivoted between remote and face-to-face delivery as restrictions eased and then returned. The team redesigned and enhanced their social media engagement and remote access to the service as well as enhancing the SHG Employment and Training web pages, which have now seen over 700 visits throughout the year.

The training team created a suite of customer training videos and interactive online sessions covering core training themes of employment, wellbeing and community and returning to face to face training when restrictions allowed. The employment team used multiple online mediums and face-to-face contacts when restrictions allowed in order to maintain essential services during the year. The team has supported the completion of 282 CVs, 811 application forms and provided one-to-one interview skills advice to 360 customers and seen over 200 attendances at a blend of face-to-face and online training throughout the year. The team have noted a change in the customer demographic that is reaching out for employment support, with higher numbers of customers traditionally nearer to the job market engaging for advice and guidance. Over this period the team has supported 37 customers who have reported losing their employment as a direct result of the pandemic.

Other initiatives to increase employability and employment opportunities include:

- SHG, in conjunction with partners B4Box and TPA, has developed 16 Kick Start placements;
- the employment and training team has designed and delivered interactive online employment sessions welcoming 85 customers;
- Unique customer training videos were created - videos now total 27 with 3,110 views;
- Work placements were maintained at a reduced rate at Cornerstone for those furthest from the employment market and four placements were completed in three departments;
- the partnership with B4Box continued to help people gain nationally accredited construction skills and resulted in 14 people being employed who were previously far removed from the labour market;
- specialist employment staff supported 216 people into sustainable employment;
- the Skills for Life training programme resulted in 49 customers attending tailored training programmes, with 20 securing employment.
- Customer training transitioned to online provision with the training and employment teams working together to deliver online sessions with 177 attendances;
- Youth hub training is now located at Cornerstone, embedding closer working with the Department of Work and Pensions to support those groups most effected by the pandemic.

SHG has a range of cross tenure services, which empower vulnerable people to live independently and sustain tenancies. Key outcomes for these services included:

- 82 new furnished tenancies were created to support people to establish themselves as tenants;

- 372 vulnerable households received a bespoke package of housing related support, with 94 per cent per cent sustaining their tenancies for at least one year after support ended;
- 30,585 welfare calls were undertaken to customers living in sheltered/60+ housing to facilitate their independence especially during lockdown and 2,869 welfare calls to older customers in general needs accommodation
- 469 visits were carried out to customers living in tower blocks who required a short-term intervention by a Block Support Officer.
- 92 private sector ASB cases resolved with cases closed in an average of 42 days. Every customer was satisfied with the outcome of the case.
- Positive Engagement Officers (PEOs) supported 115 new referrals of chaotic drug and alcohol users and people with mental health or anger management issues to help them sustain their tenancies. In total 69 cases were successfully closed during the year without the need for legal action.
- 282 customers were supported by the Tenancy Ready team in advance of being offered a tenancy, working together to address issues which had previously led to a failed tenancy and to equip the new tenant with skills to enable them to have a sustainable tenancy.

An increasing number of in-house initiatives supported older people and people with disabilities last year. For example:

- winter welfare visits to 435 of SHG's oldest customers were undertaken to identify support needs and give advice about keeping warm and well;
- the cross-tenure older persons' activity service for the over 50's reduced social isolation and enhanced mental wellbeing through 107 events for 779 attendees
- Co-ordinated welfare calls/surveys to 3,763 older customers and those classed as having additional vulnerabilities living in our general needs properties with the purpose of ensuring they were effectively supported during Covid-19 lockdown.s
- SHG's dedicated Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) service provided bespoke advice and information on 1048 occasions to customers, internal and external colleagues.
- The information included housing and care options (such as Carecall and adaptations) and well-being during the pandemic, helping customers to either remain in their homes longer or move to more suitable accommodation.
  - 118 customers received advice regarding accessing 'extra care' housing to prevent the need for residential care
  - 77 customers received advice about issues such as benefits, money management and affordability
  - 36 received advice about adaptations
  - 38 about other issues to support independent living e.g. accessing care.
- The service supported 18 people out of hospital into stepdown accommodation to facilitate the process of moving into more suitable longer-term accommodation thereby reducing hospital bed blocking.
- SHG carried out 164 adaptations on Council stock and 205 on the Council's behalf in the private sector to help people live independently in their homes for longer.

SHG's Carecall Service has had a successful first year operating its 'Universal Offer'. The Service introduced a new, self-funding model in January 2020 and has welcomed more than 1,000 new users onto this service in the first year. The enhanced offer ensures that anybody living in Stockport can access 24hr Telecare and Mobile Response services free for the first six weeks, with no set up costs. This has enabled more people to access the service and has proven that a self-funded approach works. More than 98.5 per cent of users, or 1,512 out of 1,531 customers, pay for their services as opposed to around 65 per cent when the service was commissioned by Stockport Council for those who met Care Act eligibility. The long-term objective to reduce the Council's spend on commissioning Telecare services is on-track and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Universal Offer the annual fee charged for legacy commissioned services has reduced by over £125,000 for the Council.

A great deal of work was done again last year to prevent and address homelessness in Stockport. 2020/21 saw challenges due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, but the Housing Options Team still managed to prevent homelessness in 370 instances through interventions such as mediation, negotiation with landlords and money advice. There was significant success in addressing rough sleeping with 25 people over the year supported out of street homelessness, with six additional flats purchased to provide long-term accommodation through a grant from MHCLG.

The Team increased its focus upon supporting those with complex needs through appointing a mental health support worker in conjunction with the CCG and expanding work with offenders through a dedicated outreach role. Working collaboratively with partners in social care, criminal justice and health services this is helping create a far more effective safety net for those otherwise at risk of homelessness.

SHG continued to work on initiatives with the local charity Helping the Homeless into Housing (H3) to tackle homelessness among regular users of Stepping Hill Hospital to reduce the likelihood of them experiencing health crises. Funded through the Greater Manchester Mayor's Fund, the project supports people with complex physical and mental health issues, and despite difficulties accessing the wards due to Covid-19 it has provided a range of excellent outcomes. During 2020/21 it enabled 66 households to access suitable support and accommodation, with a significant number needing to self-isolate due to Covid-19 infections or having to shield due to underlying health issues.

In the last eight months of the year SHG has recruited a second Greater Manchester Housing First (GMHF) Officer who brings a wealth of experience in homelessness. The service is now supporting 14 customers, 13 of whom are accommodated in homes in their areas of choice, and one that is accommodated in temporary accommodation awaiting a property. The service has accommodated two of the most entrenched and long-term rough sleepers in the borough, and although a big adjustment after in excess of four years sleeping rough, both are managing well with the support of GMHF/SHG. Referrals continue to be received with many successes. Customers have reconnected with family; decorated their homes; successfully engaged with substance services and undergone detox; attended health care appointments for the first time since early childhood to support with physical and

emotional health. One customer is completing some longer-term aspirations of gaining qualifications to gain employment; and another is taking on their first allotment, a lifelong dream that they thought would never happen. One customer who had 53 hospital admissions recorded in the previous ten months has had zero hospital admissions in the following ten weeks and has started some volunteering work.

The ‘A Bed Every Night’ programme has adapted swiftly and worked flexibly to meet the changing ways of working as a result of the pandemic, ensuring that individuals accommodated on the project have had access to their own individual room and are able to self-isolate in self-contained accommodation if required. Face-to-face support has continued throughout the duration of lockdown restrictions to ensure customers have received the highest standard of service and the best experience. The service continues to work closely with Greater Manchester Combined Authority to advise on data analysis, working towards more cohesive data collection methods and participating in an independent research study evaluating the A Bed Every Night scheme. Customers have been interviewed about their experiences of being accommodated on the project and the findings will be instrumental in supporting the ‘Everyone In’ campaign and improving access to services. Stockport has seen 123 referrals to A Bed Every Night during the last year, where 90 of those referred were able to secure move-on accommodation after an average of 17 days under the scheme.

The temporary accommodation service has quickly adapted over the last 12 months to ensure that high standards of support and engagement have been maintained. In support of the fight against the pandemic, the service used DToC (Delayed Transfer of Care) funding to set up a short-term accommodation project supporting the hospital discharge of patients from mental health and psychological medicines wards. It supported the repatriation of rough sleepers across the GM authorities from Manchester based hotels over the Summer. Activities and positive diversionary engagement opportunities have continued to run in Covid-19-safe environments including cooking sessions; fitness and wellbeing activities; activity and food packs. Intensive support has continued to be offered face-to-face over the last year in adherence to social distancing and government guidance. The service is working closely with primary health care providers and Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure all customers experiencing homelessness can access vaccinations.

SHG continues to successfully manage the Council’s housing register as well as supporting households to meet their own housing need through mutual exchanges. It helped 71 households in housing need to move in this way last year, saving SHG around £227,200 in void costs. In addition, it supported 19 households by providing bonds to help them access properties in the private rented sector.

To increase the pace of delivering new homes to meet housing need last year, SHG and the Council continued to work together in the ‘Viaduct Housing Partnership’. This took advantage of SHG’s skills as a developer and the Council’s strategic oversight and ability to borrow prudentially. This successful partnership saw SHG add 137 completed units to its portfolio, consisting of 80 new homes for rent and 57 for shared ownership completed across three sites, which mitigated the

loss of 52 properties through the Right to Buy. This is a significant achievement in a Borough with such scarce and expensive land resources.

A completed block of 39 apartments known as Davenport Park was acquired by SHG during the year and individual apartments are now being sold on a shared ownership basis. An existing empty building in Cheadle known as Lesley Wright House was acquired by SHG and is now under refurbishment by Three Sixty. When complete it will provide seven move-on apartments for care leavers. A one bed flat was also acquired by SHG during the year which again is being refurbished by Three Sixty. This apartment will provide move on accommodation for entrenched rough sleepers.

In the Housing Revenue Account, which are units owned by Stockport Council, there are 42 units under construction as of March 2021. Work started in-year on two new-build homes for social rent and 16 for shared ownership. At the end of March 2021, there were 262 units in the pipeline for Stockport Council, which are scheduled for delivery over the next three to four years.

During 2020/21 £2.402m in capital grant funding was drawn down from Homes England to support the delivery of new affordable homes, although this will still not make a significant impact on the problems of supply or affordability in the local housing market, which are extreme.

SHG retained its focus on delivering the Council's priority of digital inclusion to improve access to services and enhance financial and social wellbeing. Community digital sessions adapted to the restrictions and were delivered very successfully online with partner Starting Point. The number of unique learners attending rose from 139 in 2019/20 to 208 in 2020/21, and the number of Digital Champions giving more than 50 hours of their time rose from eight to 17. To support remote access, 275 devices were loaned to residents, the majority of which were SHG tenants, by a lending library facilitated through the '#digiknow' alliance, of which SHG is a key member. The process for reporting anti-social behaviour has been digitised through a reporting app called 'REMOTE Reporting', which enables the easy and instant reporting via photos, video files, audio files, and location.

SHG provides specialist support for refugees through the United Nations Gateway Protection Programme. In 2020/21, it delivered successful integration of 42 refugee placements into UK society, with support in accessing training and employment opportunities.

Community development work has contributed towards the sustainability of some local groups; with support being provided through Foundations or SHG. Funding of £532,804 was gained for 24 unique groups, which stimulated Stockport's voluntary sector and supported the Council's One Stockport agenda. Despite the restrictions, this has been supplemented by intensive partnership working with local people in key neighbourhoods. For example:

- Ongoing Women's Local Support (OWLS) provides a service to women experiencing domestic abuse across Stockport. The service complements statutory services and fills a gap by continuing to engage with women once

other services have withdrawn. Extensive support has been provided to OWLS, resulting in several successful grant bids to open, maintain and develop the OWLS drop-in hub in Stockport Town Centre.

- Funding gained by Foundations Stockport Limited has enabled expansion of existing services around food and furniture. This includes new white goods and vehicles, increasing capacity and enabling both services to continue delivery throughout the restrictions to meet continuously high demand.
- Employment projects for young people, which were delivered by local groups including Heaton Norris Pavilion committee, DWave and Rising Stars North West, were funded by multiple allocations of grant from the Workers' Educational Association. These grassroots projects use local knowledge to support young people furthest from employment, who would otherwise be missed by Job Centre Plus and other mainstream agencies.
- The restrictions have prevented many community cafes from operating in their traditional way. One such is Offerton Community Café, which has innovated by creating a partnership with Your Local Pantry and Foundations Stockport. This partnership has won grants enabling provision of hot meals for 150 children who are at risk of or are experiencing food poverty.

Due to the closure of schools and the introduction of social bubbles, Foundations were not able to run the usual holiday provision called 'Fabulous Foundations'. To support more vulnerable families in Stockport, Foundations put together craft and activity packs. Throughout the year 3,230 packs were distributed either directly to families or through schools. These were produced from Summer 2020 up to the Easter holidays in March 2021. Food packs were provided for the Easter 2021 holidays. The project was funded by the Department of Education Holiday Activities and Food Project. In total, Foundations provided 1,000 activity packs and 500 'four meal' food packs. Similarly, the Carecall service provided packs for isolated elderly people during the pandemic.

#### *Opportunities to improve*

There are a number of areas where the organisation recognises that it can still do better. For example:

- Continuing to work with Council colleagues on the implementation of the Borough Plan. In particular there will be further collaboration on neighbourhood management, tackling the zero carbon agenda and digital ambitions.
- Improving on the creation of Kick Start opportunities for young people with many roles progressing through to permanent roles or apprenticeships
- Additional funding has been secured for the Motiv8 programme which continues to provide intensive support to those facing multiple barriers to return to employment, training and education
- Youth hub at Cornerstone expansion will develop into co-location of the DWP Youth Employment Coaches working with the SHG Employment team
- SHG will do more to support groups that have been affected economically by the Covid-19 pandemic in accessing employment training and support. National and local data demonstrates that young people and women have been most significantly affected by the pandemic with the greatest impact to entry level roles and the service industry.

- Support community groups to restart after Covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased, including with funding bids and practical support

All these developments will ensure Stockoprt Homes works with the Council to reduce inequalites and relieve poverty.

### ***Aim Five - Build strong, collaborative relationships***

SHG continues to be a leading partner within the Great Manchester Housing Providers group (GMHP). This represents most of the social housing providers in the sub-region and its work supports the aims of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Great Manchester Social Care and Health Partnership (GMSCHP), ensuring the valuable contribution of housing to their agendas is understood. The Chief Executive is the Vice Chair of the GMHP group, and the Assistant Chief Executive is the lead on the Employment and Skills theme and Vice Chair of Athena (see next page for more detail)

The GMHP's collaboration includes the continued successful delivery of GM Housing First, which over a three-year period will support 300-400 homeless households with a range of complex needs. Two dedicated Housing First Officers are supporting 13 customers, 11 of whom have been accommodated in homes in their areas of choice. This includes two customers who were entrenched rough sleepers who had been sleeping rough for in excess of four years, both of whom are adjusting well to their new lives. All cases are characterised by a range of complex needs including entrenched rough sleeping, offending behaviour, substance misuse and mental and physical health issues resulting in chaotic and challenging behaviours. Customers have been supported to achieve a wide range of outcomes including reconnecting with family and friends, successful engagement with substance misuse services and detox programmes, addressing physical and mental health needs, many of which have not been addressed for many years, and decorating and furnishing their homes.

During the last year, SHG has been a lead member of the Greater Manchester Ethical Lettings Agency, a partnership established by Greater Manchester Housing Providers to work with the GMCA to improve access to the private rented sector for those currently excluded. SHG is one of five housing service providers who are working in partnership to achieve the objective<sup>13</sup> with each organisation having significant experience in working with the private rented sector (PRS) in leasing from or managing on behalf of private landlords.

Since 2019 the Rough Sleeping Initiative has funded two outreach workers through Foundations to address street homelessness in Trafford and Stockport. From 2021/22, pending final approval from the Ministry of Communities Housing and Local Government, there will be two workers focusing on Stockport alone. One of these workers will have an initial outreach role, while the other will support people in the transition to settled accommodation. Many of the people engaged have multiple and complex needs with a long history of rough sleeping, but in conjunction with the

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<sup>13</sup> Bolton at Home, ForHousing, Wigan Council and Salix Homes

Housing First scheme there have been some real successes in helping people move away from street homelessness. For example, one person had been evicted from numerous tenancies and temporary accommodation placements, but after working with the Rough Sleeping Initiative they began to work with services and accepted a housing first tenancy, resulting in the longest period of settled housing for most of their adult life.

Key outcomes achieved over the year include:

- Responding to over 340 reports of rough sleeping, of which 102 resulted in identifying a person who was rough sleeping
- 50 per cent reduction in the numbers identified as rough sleeping at the annual Rough Sleeping count in November, from 12 to six.
- 11 rough sleepers accommodated during the ‘Everyone In’ initiative during the first lockdown – seven of whom are now in settled accommodation
- Five individuals found to be rough sleeping from outside the area supported to reconnect with their local area through the Personalisation Fund
- Over 50 Rough Sleepers supported into Temporary Accommodation

The GMHP delivery company, Manchester Athena Ltd, is a vehicle for delivering key projects and attracting external funding. For example, the Motiv8 initiative, funded from the Big Lottery and European Social Fund, supports people from excluded groups with complex needs who are far removed from the labour market. SHG works in partnership with four other consortium partners to deliver the service. In the last year it supported 323 excluded people within the Stockport and Rochdale hub to achieve over 970 positive outcomes in areas such as health and well-being, finance and self-confidence and self-development. 41 of those people moved into education, training and employment. 35 people commenced job searching and eight people secured employment in a range of sectors including delivery driving, cleaning, retail and warehousing. In addition, 19 participants undertook volunteering activities within charity shops and organisations providing support during the covid-19 pandemic.

In January 2020 work commenced onsite with regards to the European Regional Development Fund project “Homes as Energy Systems”. Throughout January and up until the Covid-19 restrictions in March work was primarily focused around drilling the deep-bore holes for the ground source heat pumps at The Cloisters. The total project is valued at circa £6.1m with £2.4m coming from European grant funding. The project will continue to be delivered throughout 2021. A total of 643 measures will be completed comprising of renewable technology heat pumps, Solar PV, enhanced insulation and new roofs, which progressed following joint working with other GMHPs.

SHG main partner is Stockport Council and it will continue to be a priority to build successful and productive relationships. In the last year, there has been positive collaboration on the development of the new Borough Plan and the next five-year Delivery Plan. Key joint themes came out of these plans and include neighbourhood management, zero carbon, digital developments and reducing inequalities. Joint work will continue to ensure tangible improvements and outcomes are evidenced.

SHG continues to work closely with strategic housing and social care colleagues from the Council on a range of issues. It is a long-standing member of the Stockport Housing Partnership, which supports the Council's strategic housing function. It is also working with Stockport Council colleagues across Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing on a range of 'Ageing Well' work streams. This included analysis and planning in response to data secured through the Housing Needs Assessment, events with Registered Providers to secure commitments to the Ageing Well agenda, piloting technology and support and care models to support the development and thinking on the Academy of Ageing Well.

SHG also takes a key role in providing support. The Council's Targeted Prevention Alliance (TPA), which seeks to prevent, reduce and delay demand for statutory services through early intervention and resilience building, saw the ALMO work with six partners - receiving 4758 referrals in 2020/2021 with 1512 given advice and information. Among those people requiring longer-term support, 509 achieved all the goals they set for themselves in their Goals of Care plan and 699 made significant progress. In response to Covid-19, the TPA also provided immediate or practical help to a further 1,151 people including food and pharmacy deliveries, help with digital skills and access to devices.

SHG is a key partner in the Council's safeguarding work. This includes various working groups that support the Stockport Safeguarding Children Board, the Safeguarding Adults Board and a dedicated staffing resource provided to work within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub (MASSH) which supports families with complex needs. SHG' MASSH representative helps prevent cases of families with complex needs escalating to statutory Social Care intervention stage and gives housing advice and guidance on others. During 2020/21, this post holder provided information to 68 enquirers, this is lower than in previous years due to the role being vacant for a period combined with the impact of the pandemic and many services accessing the MASSH working differently. A range of outcomes were achieved, including: tenancy sustainment, improved health and well-being, increased school attendance, parenting support and prevention of escalation into Children's Social Care and Child Protection processes.

SHG plays a key role in the Safer Stockport Partnership (SSP). It has contributed significantly to strategic thinking and service delivery by working with partners to map trends and develop plans. At an operational level, 2020/21 saw several partnership projects to tackle anti-social behaviour. For example, SHG became a key member of the Pandemic Response Team which consisted of key organisations including Stockport Council, Greater Manchester Police and Public Health. The group held weekly meetings to assess data on Covid-19 cases across Stockport so it could agree on how to support residents, businesses, schools and other establishments to change behaviours and be Covid-19 secure while following the new restrictions responsibly. SHG also worked closely with Greater Manchester Police and Stockport Council to tackle issues of serious youth disorder in Brinnington in late autumn 2020. It resulted in enforcement action to obtain injunctions against young people involved int the most serious incidents whilst carrying out youth engagement work with other young people to divert them away from antisocial behaviour.

Although further development of Stockport's Place based work paused during the pandemic, SHG continued to support the Council's Place Based Integration (PBI) work through dedicated staffing resources and office space in a community building. The PBI approach continues to enable a wide range of agencies to share information, identify issues and collectively agree the most appropriate intervention which will engage people at an early stage, implement short and timely interventions, engage people in relevant universal services and resources and prevent escalation to high cost, reactive statutory services.

SHG continued its partnership work on a wide range of health-related projects in 2020/21. Its counselling service for tenants and TPA customers was delivered by the charity Talk Listen Change (TLC) and provided eight new students and ten existing ones with high quality placements and 253 individuals with counselling. 1,516 counselling sessions were provided across the year.

Other work included a partnership with Acorn Recovery which provides four shared three-bedroom properties with support for people abstaining from substance misuse to help them prepare for secure stable accommodation and get into long term volunteering and employment. Similarly, a service level agreement is in place with Stockport Council to provide properties for people with learning disabilities.

Last year saw SHG again supporting the Council to improve the private rented sector in the Borough. Its lettings service, Three Sixty Living, provided private landlords with high quality, reliable management services on properties throughout last year with 185 properties being managed as at year end. This helped drive up standards and encouraged landlords with empty homes to improve and relet them to households in need. Three Sixty Living will continue to support private sector availability across all property types offering full property management services to landlords and developers.

SHG manages ten community centres on the Council's behalf. During 2020/21 the centres continued to be used for a variety of activities, from children and young people activities to digital inclusion classes. During the year some of the centres were closed to community activities in line with government advice. The Centres have secured the "Good to Go" accreditation, which is the official UK mark to signal that government and industry COVID-19 guidelines are in place. The accreditation is designed to ensure cleanliness is maintained and aid social distancing. Dedicated Facebook and Instagram pages have been set up for the centres, which has helped in providing information and updates to customers during the last year.

Foundations, SHG charitable arm, aims to improve the relationships and joint working with the third sector in Stockport. During 2020/21 Foundations has worked closely with the council and Sector 3 to develop a range of projects and events to support the third sector, including a Sector Connector event that brought over 60 local groups together and Local Intelligence meetings bringing funders and groups together and providing advice and guidance on bidding processes. Working directly with local civil society groups Foundations has supported the securing of £488,425 of grant income into the Borough.

### *Opportunities to improve*

There are a number of areas where the organisation recognises that it can still do better. For example:

- Grow the portfolio of privately owned properties managed by Three Sixty Living on behalf of landlords across the Borough, providing quality private sector rental management and generate income to support core service delivery. In addition, working as part of Let Us, Greater Manchester's Ethical Lettings Agency, to improve access to, affordability and quality of properties in the privated rented sector across Greater Manchester will also increase the portfolio managed by Three Sixty Living and enhance housing opportunities for those needing to access the private rented sector.
- Support Stockport Council in its ambition to regenerate the town centre by working with developers to secure the management of any new blocks through Three Sixty Living, thereby ensuring high quality servcies are maintained.

### ***Aim Six - Improve the environment***

Last year's £18.4m Capital Investment Programme delivered a range of improvements to the housing stock on the 'big impact' basis agreed with customers. This focussed expenditure in ways that contribute best to the sustainability and financial viability of the stock. The approach means that SHG is part way through a £9.7m programme in Offerton that delivers the aims of the Offerton Masterplan to over 600 properties. The programme delivered works to 93 properties in 2020/21.

Similarly, 300 properties in Adswood and Bridgehall neighbourhoods have benefitted from a combination of new roofs, wall and chimney repointing, and external render finish. Customer satisfaction with the programme last year was 98.7 per cent and the energy performance rating of properties improved on the previous year, with 93 per cent achieving an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or above. This compares favourably to the national average Energy Performance Certificate rating of D.

Customers continued to benefit in 2020/21 from the work SHG did in previous years to retrofit homes with renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. For example, the switch from electric storage heaters to biomass district heating systems saw customers' annual heating and hot water bills reduce by 79 per cent<sup>14</sup>, customers with photovoltaic panels save approximately £191 per year on electricity and those who benefited from loft and wall cavity insulation save £200 per year. In addition, 'feed-in tariff' income generated from solar panels contributed £1,439,578<sup>15</sup> towards the Housing Revenue Account in 2020/21, which supports the improvement programme.

The Capital Programme accommodated £5.7m in 2020/21 as part of a three-year sprinkler installation programme to 22 high-rise blocks, which followed extensive customer consultation and communication work. The work, which was initiated by

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<sup>14</sup> Saving an average of £1,000

<sup>15</sup> Fit income generated between April and December 2020. Final quarter isn't available until June due to validation and billing time frames

the Council's Portfolio Member for Sustainable Stockport, resulted from a joint decision by SHG and Stockport Council to retrofit sprinkler systems across the high-rise stock. SHG has carried out wide ranging consultation with Stockport Council, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, Independent Fire Risk Assessors, and Mechanical and Electrical specialists. The three-year programme of installations started in 2019/20 and 15 high rise blocks now have sprinkler installations commissioned. The remaining seven tower blocks will have sprinklers fitted by the mid 2021/22; however, this will be subject to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and customer access.

SHG's waste management framework recycled 75 per cent per cent of its waste and sent 25 per cent to energy recovery last year, completely avoiding landfill. In addition, it supported community engagement in clean up and recycling initiatives through neighbourhood clear-outs.

SHG carries out a cyclical programme of estate inspections across the Borough, which enables issues such as fly tipping and other hazards to be identified and addressed. It reduces the impact on the environment, reduces the likelihood of vermin infestations, and makes open spaces on estates safer and more attractive. The Environmental Services team has a team dedicated to remove fly tipping and bulky waste, which supports estate management. This in turn reduces the pressure on the Council services.

In 2020/21 SHG continued to maintain a variety of quality green spaces with high levels of customer satisfaction, with 91 per cent satisfaction with the grounds maintenance service. It worked with Stockport Council to improve play areas and make improvements to play spaces in Bridgehall and Adswood. A Tree planting programme was completed in partnership with Stockport Council and City of Trees across eleven locations in the borough.

In 2019, Stockport Council transferred its ASB Service to SHG, simplifying and strengthening the approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour in residential areas and enabling the Council to make savings in a way that does not impact on front line services. During 2020/21, SHG has dealt with 196 cases in the private sector, compared to 91 the year before, successfully resolving 100 per cent of closed cases in an average of 42 calendar days. Customer satisfaction with the outcome of the case at the point of closure was recorded at 100 per cent over the period.

There were a range of initiatives to enhance the safety of neighbourhoods during the last year, including 'target hardening' work for 212 customers experiencing ASB. SHG was proactive in serving 45 Community Protection Warnings with the majority used to tackle Covid related ASB and four Community Protection Notices on behalf of the Council and taking out 44 injunctions and undertakings to address 'hotspot' issues. By recognising the individual needs of perpetrators and victims, Positive Engagement Officers (PEOs) supported 83 new referrals in 2020/21 of chaotic drug and alcohol users and people with mental health or anger management issues to help them sustain their tenancies. In total 90 cases were successfully closed during the year without the need for legal action and increase compared to 69 the year before. This contributed to reducing spend on legal action by £191,352 compared to anticipated spend. This approach has contributed to sustainable

changes in behaviour, with all having stopped causing nuisance altogether as a result of this specialist support.

#### *Opportunities to improve*

There are areas where the organisation recognises that it can still do better. For example:

- There will be a restructure of assets and investment functions to deliver efficiencies and ensure clear points for collaboration between teams.
- The learning from a recent flood risk study across the housing portfolio will be implemented. Improvement works to make stock more resilient to flood risks will be planned and scheduled as part of the capital programme.
- A new Climate Change Strategy will be implemented in 2021 which will run until 2026 and support the Council in delivering its Climate Strategy. The objectives set out in the strategy will reduce SHG emissions and minimise environmental impacts over the next five years while leading to the aim of being carbon neutral by 2038. Some of the key targets within the strategy include a 48 per cent CO<sub>2</sub> reduction by 2025 across the organisation (against baseline emission figures), increasing the number of electric vehicles within the operational fleet to at least 60 per cent by 2024 and 100 per cent by 2028, 100 per cent of properties to be EPC C or above by 2025 and 100 per cent of customers offered Carbon Literacy training by 2025.

#### **Conclusion**

Despite the challenges presented by Covid-19, SHG continued to deliver services and support residents during 2020/21. It adapted its approach to service delivery to ensure that performance and customer satisfaction levels remained high during the pandemic. SHG engaged with customers in a range of ways, taking opportunities to improve by constantly being open to challenge, listening to customers, stakeholders and staff and reviewing services. It grew its business and delivered significant efficiencies.

SHG and its subsidiaries continue to deliver against Council and customer priorities including promoting Stockport and contributing to its one team approach.

SHG and its subsidiary companies continue to work innovatively with the Council to meet housing need and enhance inclusive growth in the Borough. It supports the Council's priorities in an ever-changing environment; constantly seeking opportunities to invest in and transform the lives of people in Stockport. None of this would be possible without a strong and effective partnership with the Council which remains a priority for SHG.

## **Appendix One – Achievements mapped against the Council’s Corporate Plan goals**

### **Stockport People are able to make positive choices and be independent and those who need support will get it**

SHG continued its commitment to reducing inequalities in 2020/21. Its charitable company, Foundations Stockport, took on or continued the management of several new and existing projects, including the Motiv8 Service. Motiv8 works with people with complex needs that are most removed from the labour market, moving them towards education, job searching and employment. Your Local Pantries and the Furniture Recycling Service have also been transferred to Foundations Stockport, enabling the team to identify and explore additional sources of funding which were previously unavailable. Funding has also been secured from the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government to fund two Outreach roles working with Rough Sleepers across Stockport and Trafford. The charity's aims are:

- 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.

Several SHG advice services helped combat poverty among customers last year. For example:

- Energy Solutions Advisors carried out 645 new cases to give customers free and impartial advice on switching supplier, eligibility for government grants and winter payments. This saved customers £141,118, which includes warm homes discount and Charis grant payments, helping them get the most out of their low carbon appliances;
- 228 customers were supported to apply for savings on their water charges at an average annual saving of £180 per customer
- Money Advisors worked with 2,714 customers to help maximise their household incomes. They assisted with claims for new or additional benefits, challenging incorrect benefit decisions and applying for trust funds and grants. This resulted in £7.02m of additional income for customers.
- A team of specialist Money Advisors is in place, offering intensive support to all new Universal Credit (UC) claimants during the first six weeks of their claim. Support starts from the point of SHG being made aware of a new claim, to the claimant receiving their first UC payment.
- During 2019/20, the team supported 1,331 UC claimants, mainly as a result of being notified about new claims via the DWP Landlord Portal. All claimants are contacted initially by telephone, with a face-to-face appointment arranged if required. Out of the UC cases who engaged with the team, 87 per cent received their first payment and paid their rent as requested.

Since April 2020, Your Local Pantry has attracted 532 new members providing affordable groceries to an average membership of 374 households. 7,290 visits have been made across the five pantries, offering potential savings for members of £842 per household per year with total savings across the membership amounting to £120,285 in 2020/21.

A group of up to 29 community volunteers manage the day-to-day running of each Pantry. This includes taking deliveries and storing and rotating stock, completing opening and closing checks and supporting members with their weekly shop. During 2020/21, the pantries generated £73,109 of social value because of volunteering alone with 2,997 hours of volunteer time being committed. The Service changed the way it operated by delivering packages during the Covid-19 pandemic, delivering directly to people's homes and processing referrals from the Council's Coronavirus helpline. During the last 12 months, 18 volunteers have been recruited and supported through a comprehensive induction programme including training in manual handling and Food Hygiene Level two.

SHG supported customers to navigate the complex employment landscape in 2020/21 and it has supported 292 people into employment. In 2020/21, employment opportunities were greatly reduced in many entry-level sectors. The period between April to June 2020 was particularly challenging as several sectors completely stopped all recruitment and furloughed their staff. The team focused on supporting customers to identify transferrable skills and transition to sectors that were actively recruiting, proactively engaging local businesses to offer sector-based recruitment campaigns for those organisations with vacancies. Two such businesses from different sectors worked with SHG and 49 people participated in adapted virtual sector-based events in 2020 with 20 people securing jobs through these campaigns. The team responded swiftly to customer needs and pivoted between remote and face-to-face delivery as restrictions eased and then returned. The team redesigned and enhanced their social media engagement and remote access to the service as well as enhancing the SHG Employment and Training web pages, which have now seen over 700 visits throughout the year.

The training team created a suite of customer training videos and interactive online sessions covering core training themes of employment, wellbeing and community and returning to face to face training when restrictions allowed. The employment team used multiple online mediums and face-to-face contacts when restrictions allowed in order to maintain essential services during the year. The team has supported the completion of 282 CVs, 811 application forms and provided one-to-one interview skills advice to 360 customers and seen over 200 attendances at a blend of face-to-face and online training throughout the year. The team have noted a change in the customer demographic that is reaching out for employment support, with higher numbers of customers traditionally nearer to the job market engaging for advice and guidance. Over this period the team has supported 37 customers who have reported losing their employment as a direct result of the pandemic.

Other initiatives to increase employability and employment opportunities include:

- SHG, in conjunction with partners B4Box and TPA, has developed 16 Kick Start placements;

- the employment and training team has designed and delivered interactive online employment sessions welcoming 85 customers;
- Unique customer training videos were created - videos now total 27 with 3,110 views;
- Work placements were maintained at a reduced rate at Cornerstone for those furthest from the employment market and four placements were completed in three departments;
- the partnership with B4Box continued to help people gain nationally accredited construction skills and resulted in 14 people being employed who were previously far removed from the labour market;
- specialist employment staff supported 216 people into sustainable employment;
- the Skills for Life training programme resulted in 49 customers attending tailored training programmes, with 20 securing employment.
- Customer training transitioned to online provision with the training and employment teams working together to deliver online sessions with 177 attendances;
- Youth hub training is now located at Cornerstone, embedding closer working with the Department of Work and Pensions to support those groups most effected by the pandemic.

SHG has a range of cross tenure services, which empower vulnerable people to live independently and sustain tenancies. Key outcomes for these services included:

- 82 new furnished tenancies were created to support people to establish themselves as tenants;
- 372 vulnerable households received a bespoke package of housing related support, with 94 per cent per cent sustaining their tenancies for at least one year after support ended;
- 30,585 welfare calls were undertaken to customers living in sheltered/60+ housing to facilitate their independence especially during lockdown and 2,869 welfare calls to older customers in general needs accommodation
- 469 visits were carried out to customers living in tower blocks who required a short-term intervention by a Block Support Officer.
- 92 private sector ASB cases resolved with cases closed in an average of 42 days. Every customer was satisfied with the outcome of the case.
- Positive Engagement Officers (PEOs) supported 115 new referrals of chaotic drug and alcohol users and people with mental health or anger management issues to help them sustain their tenancies. In total 69 cases were successfully closed during the year without the need for legal action.
- 282 customers were supported by the Tenancy Ready team in advance of being offered a tenancy, working together to address issues which had previously led to a failed tenancy and to equip the new tenant with skills to enable them to have a sustainable tenancy.

An increasing number of in-house initiatives supported older people and people with disabilities last year. For example:

- winter welfare visits to 435 of SHG's oldest customers were undertaken to identify support needs and give advice about keeping warm and well;

- the cross-tenure older persons' activity service for the over 50's reduced social isolation and enhanced mental wellbeing through 107 events for 779 attendees
- Co-ordinated welfare calls/surveys to 3,763 older customers and those classed as having additional vulnerabilities living in our general needs properties with the purpose of ensuring they were effectively supported during Covid-19 lockdown.s
- SHG's dedicated Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) service provided bespoke advice and information on 1048 occasions to customers, internal and external colleagues.
- The information included housing and care options (such as Carecall and adaptations) and well-being during the pandemic, helping customers to either remain in their homes longer or move to more suitable accommodation.
  - 118 customers received advice regarding accessing 'extra care' housing to prevent the need for residential care
  - 77 customers received advice about issues such as benefits, money management and affordability
  - 36 received advice about adaptations
  - 38 about other issues to support independent living e.g. accessing care.
- The service supported 18 people out of hospital into stepdown accommodation to facilitate the process of moving into more suitable longer-term accommodation thereby reducing hospital bed blocking.
- SHG carried out 164 adaptations on Council stock and 205 on the Council's behalf in the private sector to help people live independently in their homes for longer.

SHG's Carecall Service has had a successful first year operating it's 'Universal Offer'. The Service introduced a new, self-funding model in January 2020 and has welcomed more than 1,000 new users onto this service in the first year. The enhanced offer ensures that anybody living in Stockport can access 24hr Telecare and Mobile Response services free for the first six weeks, with no set up costs. This has enabled more people to access the service and has proven that a self-funded approach works. More than 98.5 per cent of users, or 1,512 out of 1,531 customers, pay for their services as opposed to around 65 per cent when the service was commissioned by Stockport Council for those who met Care Act eligibility. The long-term objective to reduce the Council's spend on commissioning Telecare services is on-track and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Universal Offer the annual fee charged for legacy commissioned services has reduced by over £125,000 for the Council.

A great deal of work was done again last year to prevent and address homelessness in Stockport. 2020/21 saw challenges due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, but the Housing Options Team still managed to prevent homelessness in 370 instances through interventions such as mediation, negotiation with landlords and money advice. There was significant success in addressing rough sleeping with 25 people over the year supported out of street homelessness, with six additional flats purchased to provide long-term accommodation through a grant from MHCLG.

The Team increased its focus upon supporting those with complex needs through appointing a mental health support worker in conjunction with the CCG and

expanding work with offenders through a dedicated outreach role. Working collaboratively with partners in social care, criminal justice and health services this is helping create a far more effective safety net for those otherwise at risk of homelessness.

SHG continued to work on initiatives with the local charity Helping the Homeless into Housing (H3) to tackle homelessness among regular users of Stepping Hill Hospital to reduce the likelihood of them experiencing health crises. Funded through the Greater Manchester Mayor's Fund, the project supports people with complex physical and mental health issues, and despite difficulties accessing the wards due to Covid-19 it has provided a range of excellent outcomes. During 2020/21 it enabled 66 households to access suitable support and accommodation, with a significant number needing to self-isolate due to Covid-19 infections or having to shield due to underlying health issues.

In the last eight months of the year SHG has recruited a second Greater Manchester Housing First (GMHF) Officer who brings a wealth of experience in homelessness. The service is now supporting 14 customers, 13 of whom are accommodated in homes in their areas of choice, and one that is accommodated in temporary accommodation awaiting a property. The service has accommodated two of the most entrenched and long-term rough sleepers in the borough, and although a big adjustment after in excess of four years sleeping rough, both are managing well with the support of GMHF/SHG. Referrals continue to be received with many successes. Customers have reconnected with family; decorated their homes; successfully engaged with substance services and undergone detox; attended health care appointments for the first time since early childhood to support with physical and emotional health. One customer is completing some longer-term aspirations of gaining qualifications to gain employment; and another is taking on their first allotment, a lifelong dream that they thought would never happen. One customer who had 53 hospital admissions recorded in the previous ten months has had zero hospital admissions in the following ten weeks and has started some volunteering work.

The 'A Bed Every Night' programme has adapted swiftly and worked flexibly to meet the changing ways of working as a result of the pandemic, ensuring that individuals accommodated on the project have had access to their own individual room and are able to self-isolate in self-contained accommodation if required. Face-to-face support has continued throughout the duration of lockdown restrictions to ensure customers have received the highest standard of service and the best experience. The service continues to work closely with Greater Manchester Combined Authority to advise on data analysis, working towards more cohesive data collection methods and participating in an independent research study evaluating the A Bed Every Night scheme. Customers have been interviewed about their experiences of being accommodated on the project and the findings will be instrumental in supporting the 'Everyone In' campaign and improving access to services. Stockport has seen 123 referrals to A Bed Every Night during the last year, where 90 of those referred were able to secure move-on accommodation after an average of 17 days under the scheme.

The temporary accommodation service has quickly adapted over the last 12 months to ensure that high standards of support and engagement have been maintained. In support of the fight against the pandemic, the service used DToC (Delayed Transfer of Care) funding to set up a short-term accommodation project supporting the hospital discharge of patients from mental health and psychological medicines wards. It supported the repatriation of rough sleepers across the GM authorities from Manchester based hotels over the Summer. Activities and positive diversionary engagement opportunities have continued to run in Covid-19-safe environments including cooking sessions; fitness and wellbeing activities; activity and food packs. Intensive support has continued to be offered face-to-face over the last year in adherence to social distancing and government guidance. The service is working closely with primary health care providers and Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure all customers experiencing homelessness can access vaccinations.

SHG continues to successfully manage the Council's housing register as well as supporting households to meet their own housing need through mutual exchanges. It helped 71 households in housing need to move in this way last year, saving SHG around £227,200 in void costs. In addition, it supported 19 households by providing bonds to help them access properties in the private rented sector.

To increase the pace of delivering new homes to meet housing need last year, SHG and the Council continued to work together in the 'Viaduct Housing Partnership'. This took advantage of SHG's skills as a developer and the Council's strategic oversight and ability to borrow prudentially. This successful partnership saw SHG add 137 completed units to its portfolio, consisting of 80 new homes for rent and 57 for shared ownership completed across three sites, which mitigated the loss of 52 properties through the Right to Buy. This is a significant achievement in a Borough with such scarce and expensive land resources.

A completed block of 39 apartments known as Davenport Park was acquired by SHG during the year and individual apartments are now being sold on a shared ownership basis. An existing empty building in Cheadle known as Lesley Wright House was acquired by SHG and is now under refurbishment by Three Sixty. When complete it will provide seven move-on apartments for care leavers. A one bed flat was also acquired by SHG during the year which again is being refurbished by Three Sixty. This apartment will provide move on accommodation for entrenched rough sleepers.

In the Housing Revenue Account, which are units owned by Stockport Council, there are 42 units under construction as of March 2021. Work started in-year on two new-build homes for social rent and 16 for shared ownership. At the end of March 2021, there were 262 units in the pipeline for Stockport Council, which are scheduled for delivery over the next three to four years.

During 2020/21 £2.402m in capital grant funding was drawn down from Homes England to support the delivery of new affordable homes, although this will still not make a significant impact on the problems of supply or affordability in the local housing market, which are extreme.

SHG retained its focus on delivering the Council's priority of digital inclusion to improve access to services and enhance financial and social wellbeing. Community digital sessions adapted to the restrictions and were delivered very successfully online with partner Starting Point. The number of unique learners attending rose from 139 in 2019/20 to 208 in 2020/21, and the number of Digital Champions giving more than 50 hours of their time rose from eight to 17. To support remote access, 275 devices were loaned to residents, the majority of which were SHG tenants, by a lending library facilitated through the '#digiknow' alliance, of which SHG is a key member. The process for reporting anti-social behaviour has been digitised through a reporting app called 'ReMOTE Reporting', which enables the easy and instant reporting via photos, video files, audio files, and location.

SHG provides specialist support for refugees through the United Nations Gateway Protection Programme. In 2020/21, it delivered successful integration of 42 refugee placements into UK society, with support in accessing training and employment opportunities.

Community development work has contributed towards the sustainability of some local groups; with support being provided through Foundations or SHG. Funding of £532,804 was gained for 24 unique groups, which stimulated Stockport's voluntary sector and supported the Council's One Stockport agenda. Despite the restrictions, this has been supplemented by intensive partnership working with local people in key neighbourhoods. For example:

- Ongoing Women's Local Support (OWLS) provides a service to women experiencing domestic abuse across Stockport. The service complements statutory services and fills a gap by continuing to engage with women once other services have withdrawn. Extensive support has been provided to OWLS, resulting in several successful grant bids to open, maintain and develop the OWLS drop-in hub in Stockport Town Centre.
- Funding gained by Foundations Stockport Limited has enabled expansion of existing services around food and furniture. This includes new white goods and vehicles, increasing capacity and enabling both services to continue delivery throughout the restrictions to meet continuously high demand.
- Employment projects for young people, which were delivered by local groups including Heaton Norris Pavilion committee, DWave and Rising Stars North West, were funded by multiple allocations of grant from the Workers' Educational Association. These grassroots projects use local knowledge to support young people furthest from employment, who would otherwise be missed by Job Centre Plus and other mainstream agencies.
- The restrictions have prevented many community cafes from operating in their traditional way. One such is Offerton Community Café, which has innovated by creating a partnership with Your Local Pantry and Foundations Stockport. This partnership has won grants enabling provision of hot meals for 150 children who are at risk of or are experiencing food poverty.

Due to the closure of schools and the introduction of social bubbles, Foundations were not able to run the usual holiday provision called 'Fabulous Foundations'. To support more vulnerable families in Stockport, Foundations put together craft and activity packs. Throughout the year 3,230 packs were distributed either directly to

families or through schools. These were produced from Summer 2020 up to the Easter holidays in March 2021. Food packs were provided for the Easter 2021 holidays. The project was funded by the Department of Education Holiday Activities and Food Project. In total, Foundations provided 1,000 activity packs and 500 ‘four meal’ food packs. Similarly, the Carecall service provided packs for isolated elderly people during the pandemic.

SHG continues to be a leading partner within the Great Manchester Housing Providers group (GMHP). This represents most of the social housing providers in the sub-region and its work supports the aims of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Great Manchester Social Care and Health Partnership (GMSCHP), ensuring the valuable contribution of housing to their agendas is understood. The Chief Executive is the Vice Chair of the GMHP group, and the Assistant Chief Executive is the lead on the Employment and Skills theme and Vice Chair of Athena (see next page for more detail).

The GMHP’s collaboration includes the continued successful delivery of GM Housing First, which over a three-year period will support 300-400 homeless households with a range of complex needs. Two dedicated Housing First Officers are supporting 13 customers, 11 of whom have been accommodated in homes in their areas of choice. This includes two customers who were entrenched rough sleepers who had been sleeping rough for in excess of four years, both of whom are adjusting well to their new lives. All cases are characterised by a range of complex needs including entrenched rough sleeping, offending behaviour, substance misuse and mental and physical health issues resulting in chaotic and challenging behaviours. Customers have been supported to achieve a wide range of outcomes including reconnecting with family and friends, successful engagement with substance misuse services and detox programmes, addressing physical and mental health needs, many of which have not been addressed for many years, and decorating and furnishing their homes.

During the last year, SHG has been a lead member of the Greater Manchester Ethical Lettings Agency, a partnership established by Greater Manchester Housing Providers to work with the GMCA to improve access to the private rented sector for those currently excluded. SHG is one of five housing service providers who are working in partnership to achieve the objective<sup>16</sup> with each organisation having significant experience in working with the private rented sector (PRS) in leasing from or managing on behalf of private landlords.

Since 2019 the Rough Sleeping Initiative has funded two outreach workers through Foundations to address street homelessness in Trafford and Stockport. From 2021/22, pending final approval from the Ministry of Communities Housing and Local Government, there will be two workers focusing on Stockport alone. One of these workers will have an initial outreach role, while the other will support people in the transition to settled accommodation. Many of the people engaged have multiple and complex needs with a long history of rough sleeping, but in conjunction with the Housing First scheme there have been some real successes in helping people move

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<sup>16</sup> Bolton at Home, ForHousing, Wigan Council and Salix Homes

away from street homelessness. For example, one person had been evicted from numerous tenancies and temporary accommodation placements, but after working with the Rough Sleeping Initiative they began to work with services and accepted a housing first tenancy, resulting in the longest period of settled housing for most of their adult life.

Key outcomes achieved over the year include:

- Responding to over 340 reports of rough sleeping, of which 102 resulted in identifying a person who was rough sleeping
- 50 per cent reduction in the numbers identified as rough sleeping at the annual Rough Sleeping count in November, from 12 to six.
- 11 rough sleepers accommodated during the 'Everyone In' initiative during the first lockdown – seven of whom are now in settled accommodation
- Five individuals found to be rough sleeping from outside the area supported to reconnect with their local area through the Personalisation Fund
- Over 50 Rough Sleepers supported into Temporary Accommodation

The GMHP delivery company, Manchester Athena Ltd, is a vehicle for delivering key projects and attracting external funding. For example, the Motiv8 initiative, funded from the Big Lottery and European Social Fund, supports people from excluded groups with complex needs who are far removed from the labour market. SHG works in partnership with four other consortium partners to deliver the service. In the last year it supported 323 excluded people within the Stockport and Rochdale hub to achieve over 970 positive outcomes in areas such as health and well-being, finance and self-confidence and self-development. 41 of those people moved into education, training and employment. 35 people commenced job searching and eight people secured employment in a range of sectors including delivery driving, cleaning, retail and warehousing. In addition, 19 participants undertook volunteering activities within charity shops and organisations providing support during the covid-19 pandemic.

SHG also takes a key role in providing support. The Council's Targeted Prevention Alliance (TPA), which seeks to prevent, reduce and delay demand for statutory services through early intervention and resilience building, saw the ALMO work with six partners - receiving 4758 referrals in 2020/2021 with 1512 given advice and information. Among those people requiring longer-term support, 509 achieved all the goals they set for themselves in their Goals of Care plan and 699 made significant progress. In response to Covid-19, the TPA also provided immediate or practical help to a further 1,151 people including food and pharmacy deliveries, help with digital skills and access to devices.

Communities pulled together during the year with 26 mutual aid groups being set up in Stockport. SHG supported these with 'Team around the Place Captains' being a first point of contact for signposting, advice and help with funding applications. 'Team around the Place' supported partner agencies with funding bids to inequalities funds for Lancashire Hill and Offerton, ensuring residents' voices were included, bringing in £14,000 of funding to help residents to remain active or start to become more active. The number of new groups grew substantially, such as FRESH (Food Ready Every School Holiday) which started as a small group but built up into making multiple funding bids and securing a van. Other groups such as 'WHY sports' changed their

remit from sports provision to food provision, using donations from their followers to feed local people in need.

The Customer Engagement Service signposted residents to support and training so they kept connected with families and online services via the DigiKnow Alliance and Starting Point Digital Champions. The Offerton Community Café started an order and delivery service for older residents who had to shield and didn't have family living close by, which provided four healthy, homemade low-cost meals. This was followed by offering a Sunday Roast for any resident within the Offerton and Great Moor areas. The Activities Committee helped to supply activity kits to the community, along with both community cafes. Both community cafes linked up with Your Local Pantry to provide homecooked, healthy meals for the pilot of their family offer during the summer school holidays. The Community Fund supported groups to take their activities online, such as OWLS and The Cherry Tree Project.

Delivering excellent services to customers is only possible with an engaged and well-motivated employee team. Strong 'Colleague Voice' groups represent people from across the business and are key to planning activities like the annual colleague festival, ASPIRE Awards and Charity of Choice activities. Last year Colleague Voice shaped policies on SHG's health cash plan, recruitment and selection, and new ways of working. Alongside the colleague voice groups there are three colleague diversity groups focused around Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), disability and LGBT themes. The groups provide a space for team members to share experiences, celebrate diversity and promote inclusion, and contribute to the development of plans, processes and strategies.

SHG was recognised again by 'Best Companies' and 'Investors in People' in 2020 as a role model organisation where people want to work. The Sunday Times named it Britain's number one 'not for profit' and a 'Three Star – World Class' employer. The Top 100 Lists were announced for 2021, naming SHG as the 'Top Housing Organisation to Work For' alongside 33<sup>rd</sup> place in the 'Large Organisations' list and 28th in the 'North West' Regional lists. SHG has retained the accreditation for the 13<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, which demonstrates the long-term commitment to colleague experience and engagement. These judgements are based on responses from an independently run, confidential team member survey so they reflect the views of people who are delivering services. The ALMO also retained its Investors in People Platinum accreditation and Health and Wellbeing Award for commitment to people development.

There was a continuation in 2020/21 of SHG's commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of team members recognising the impact that the pandemic could have on issues such as psychological wellbeing. SHG developed a forward plan of activities to support colleagues during this time, including utilisation of the Active Listeners and Employee Assistance schemes, undertaking dedicated welfare calls to priority team members, weekly hints and tips in SHG's online newsletter and additional resilience, mental health and suicide awareness. It resulted in 582 course attendances and 1856 learning and support hours.

The GROW<sup>17</sup> framework for developing the workforce continued to offer opportunities for colleagues to enhance their skills and knowledge. There are several pathways on the scheme. Utilising a hybrid approach to delivery SHG was able to continue to support the Professional Development Pathway, which gives team members access to qualifications ranging from Level Two to Level Seven, and the Facilitator pathway, which upskills individuals to develop and facilitate workshops for colleagues, and the Progression Pathway which supports Leadership Development. In addition, the GAP mentoring program and Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) mentoring program supports professional development with SHG a participant in the scheme in 2020/21.

SHG's approach to offering apprenticeships once again demonstrated its commitment to providing development opportunities and ensuring they are high quality jobs that make staff want to stay with the organisation. SHG employed 15 apprenticeships during the year each of which was paid at least the 'Living Wage Foundation' level rather than an apprentice rate. The apprenticeships were 18 months long, six months longer than 'standard' placements. The extended placements ensure that the apprentices have time to develop the skills they need to move on to permanent jobs and benefit from the 'move on' support it offers. Of the 15 apprentices, two have won external awards for their achievements and another two have received internal awards for the commitment to their roles. Over the last five years a further 33 apprentices have been employed, of whom 13 went on to permanent jobs within SHG and 16 with other employers, with only four leaving before completing the apprenticeship.

Last year saw SHG employ one graduate apprentice to carry out short term projects and support current SHG initiatives. The projects supported the graduate to become job ready while providing the organisation with valuable research work. The work focused on energy efficiency, fuel poverty and the energy advice service.

SHG is a Stonewall Diversity Champion organisation. This recognises its commitment to supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, Questioning and Intersex people in the workplace and to developing services to customers that are LGBT+. A dedicated LGBT+ staff forum ensures SHG understands and values its LGBT+ communities, provides places where LGBT+ people choose to live, work and socialise and takes an interest in access and service delivery issues for customers.

SHG is committed to ensuring equality and diversity in its workforce. In 2020/21 the percentage of BAME staff rose from 8.1 to 8.7 per cent and its median gender pay gap stands at 9.4 per cent<sup>18</sup>, the same as the percentage for the previous year. The 2020 Gender Pay Gap demonstrated that there is strong gender segregation in some roles. This trend is unchanged in the 2021 data which confirms that the roles that have a female gender bias at SHG still tend to fall in the lower quartiles, where those with a male gender bias tend to have higher median pay. This trend is reflected nationally. SHG it is part of a Greater Manchester Housing Providers research project 'Generating Routes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)

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<sup>17</sup> GROW is the working title given to all learning, personal and career development activity across SHG

<sup>18</sup> The median pay for women is £13.63 and for men it is £12.35

Leadership,<sup>19</sup> which is developing ideas for improving diversity and includes a BAME mentoring programme of which SHG is a participant for mentors and mentees.

Corporate social responsibility is central to SHG's culture and helps motivate its team members, who embrace opportunities to 'give something back'. For example, team members raised £20,454 for MQ, which is SHG's Charity of Choice, and did 6,516 hours of volunteering for local causes last year which included; vaccine marshalling, the distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), supporting our local pantries and supporting local helplines.

### **Stockport will benefit from a thriving economy**

SHG constantly reviews its structure to ensure it makes the best use of resources. In 2020/21 this included bringing together housing management and repairs services into an Operations Directorate to provide clearer oversight of complementary housing management and maintenance processes. In addition, a new Director of Foundations has been created to ensure the development of the charitable arm of SHG continues to grow, thrive and develop in line with the overall ambitions of SHG.

Wherever possible, SHG streamlines systems and processes to optimise use of resources. For example, it:

- Procured a new housing management system that will create a more efficient approach to data capture and usage. The system will begin to be developed in 2021, although it will take two years to become fully embedded and utilised.
- Introduced Microsoft 365 across all business areas to improve remote working, collaboration, and document and data management

In addition to maximising efficiencies, SHG has been very successful in attracting external funding. Its dedicated funding officer secured £532,804 of external grant and £505,487 of match funding to support a range of projects, including employment, community growing; digital inclusion; health and wellbeing; and environmental schemes. Similarly, it has delivered services to other organisations to generate income, for example the anti-social behaviour service installed noise monitoring equipment and CCTV on a contract basis.

A range of contracts were delivered to extend successful services delivered by SHG and partners. A funding extension was secured for the Targeted Prevention Alliance, the Alliance for Positive Relationships and the Wellbeing Independence Network, each of which runs to March 2022 with a full commission expected late 2021. Additional funding was previously secured for Motiv8, extending the service to early 2022, and following discussions with funders, further monies have been secured to extend delivery to early 2023.

SHG works to support the best use of resources across the Council's family of companies. For example, it provided energy management services to 46 local schools, which collectively spend over £1.37 million a year on energy. This allowed

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<sup>19</sup> in association Manchester Metropolitan University

them to benefit from its Energy Procurement Strategy, which typically results in tariffs of 11 per cent below the market average.

Projects where SHG was able to carry out work at a more competitive rate than commercial contractors and still make a small surplus improved value for money across the Council family. For example, Three Sixty successfully tendered for the fixed wire testing programme as a client for the Customer Safety Service, providing better value for money through better communications, open book reporting and investment back into the wider Group. In addition, Three Sixty successfully tendered for several disability adaptation projects for SHG with one project completed and three on-site during the year.

SHG's subsidiary companies were set up to maximise income, protect core services and help deliver the Council's objectives in the most focussed and cost-effective way. In 2020/21:

- Viaduct Partnerships delivered the Group's development programme efficiently. It completed of 80 new homes for rent and 57 for shared ownership within the Borough during 2020/21, with a further 313 individual units under construction at the end of 2020/21. Viaduct Partnerships made tax efficiencies of £37,194 for the Group in 2020/21;
- Three Sixty delivered a significant proportion of the capital programme, with turnover of £4.5m and generating a £158,000 surplus that was gift-aided to Foundations, enabling more services to be delivered to local communities. To demonstrate value for money on the works, Three Sixty benchmarked costs to ensure its services are competitive, which is further demonstrated by Three Sixty's success in securing external contracts on price.
- Foundations had its second full year of trading, with a turnover of over £1.6 million, which helped it to deliver its charitable activities. Foundations also developed its first Business Plan, setting a clear framework for operations over the next five years.

A strong value for money ethos exists within SHG. It makes best use of resources by generating efficiencies, bidding for external funding and channelling income into service delivery, based on priorities agreed with customers. Many efficiencies are non-cashable and are translated directly into service improvements.

Efficiencies of 5.91 per cent of the revenue budget were generated in 2020/21.

Some examples include:

- providing a furniture re-use service that supports tenancy sustainment, saving £94,113;
- Early engagement with customers that are experiencing financial difficulties, reducing court actions and saving £30,000;
- Taking a positive engagement approach to anti-social behaviour, reducing the need for legal action and saving £191,000;
- Renegotiating fixed wire testing costs, saving £21,400;
- Reducing the cost per unit of biomass fuel, saving £30,700;
- Supported 71 "in need" households to move via mutual exchange scheme rather than creating a void property, saving £178,000.

SHG considers that efficiency is about delivering ‘more for less’ but this does not always mean making a cash saving. During 2020/21 it has continued to develop its approach to procurement, using standard documentation for tender scoring, which provides consistency for suppliers and staff when they consider social value requirements. It has linked those requirements to service delivery such as employment support initiatives. SHG’s involvement with a group of housing providers from across Greater Manchester has continued during the year. It has continued to take a lead on data collection and analysis for the group and it has taken a co-lead role on the Group’s communication plan. This has raised the profile of social housing providers across the region and celebrated the delivery of social value outcomes.

### **Stockport will be a place people want to live**

In January 2020 work commenced onsite with regards to the European Regional Development Fund project “Homes as Energy Systems”. Throughout January and up until the Covid-19 restrictions in March work was primarily focused around drilling the deep-bore holes for the ground source heat pumps at The Cloisters. The total project is valued at circa £6.1m with £2.4m coming from European grant funding. The project will continue to be delivered throughout 2021. A total of 643 measures will be completed comprising of renewable technology heat pumps, Solar PV, enhanced insulation and new roofs, which progressed following joint working with other GMHPs.

SHG continues to work closely with strategic housing and social care colleagues from the Council on a range of issues. It is a long-standing member of the Stockport Housing Partnership, which supports the Council’s strategic housing function. It is also working with Stockport Council colleagues across Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing on a range of ‘Ageing Well’ work streams. This included analysis and planning in response to data secured through the Housing Needs Assessment, events with Registered Providers to secure commitments to the Ageing Well agenda, piloting technology and support and care models to support the development and thinking on the Academy of Ageing Well.

Last year saw SHG again supporting the Council to improve the private rented sector in the Borough. Its lettings service, Three Sixty Living, provided private landlords with high quality, reliable management services on properties throughout last year with 185 properties being managed as at year end. This helped drive up standards and encouraged landlords with empty homes to improve and relet them to households in need. Three Sixty Living will continue to support private sector availability across all property types offering full property management services to landlords and developers.

During the last year, SHG has been a lead member of the Greater Manchester Ethical Lettings Agency, a partnership established by Greater Manchester Housing Providers to work with the GMCA to improve access to the private rented sector for those currently excluded. SHG is one of five housing service providers who are working in partnership to achieve the objective<sup>20</sup> with each organisation having

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<sup>20</sup> Bolton at Home, ForHousing, Wigan Council and Salix Homes

significant experience in working with the private rented sector (PRS) in leasing from or managing on behalf of private landlords.

Customers continued to benefit in 2020/21 from the work SHG did in previous years to retrofit homes with renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. For example, the switch from electric storage heaters to biomass district heating systems saw customers' annual heating and hot water bills reduce by 79 per cent<sup>21</sup>, customers with photovoltaic panels save approximately £191 per year on electricity and those who benefited from loft and wall cavity insulation save £200 per year. In addition, 'feed-in tariff' income generated from solar panels contributed £1,439,578<sup>22</sup> towards the Housing Revenue Account in 2020/21, which supports the improvement programme.

Last year's £18.4m Capital Investment Programme delivered a range of improvements to the housing stock on the 'big impact' basis agreed with customers. This focussed expenditure in ways that contribute best to the sustainability and financial viability of the stock. The approach means that SHG is part way through a £9.7m programme in Offerton that delivers the aims of the Offerton Masterplan to over 600 properties. The programme delivered works to 93 properties in 2020/21.

Similarly, 300 properties in Adswood and Bridgehall neighbourhoods have benefitted from a combination of new roofs, wall and chimney repointing, and external render finish. Customer satisfaction with the programme last year was 98.7 per cent and the energy performance rating of properties improved on the previous year, with 93 per cent achieving an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or above. This compares favourably to the national average Energy Performance Certificate rating of D.

The Capital Programme accommodated £5.7m in 2020/21 as part of a three-year sprinkler installation programme to 22 high-rise blocks, which followed extensive customer consultation and communication work. The work, which was initiated by the Council's Portfolio Member for Sustainable Stockport, resulted from a joint decision by SHG and Stockport Council to retrofit sprinkler systems across the high-rise stock. SHG has carried out wide ranging consultation with Stockport Council, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, Independent Fire Risk Assessors, and Mechanical and Electrical specialists. The three-year programme of installations started in 2019/20 and 15 high rise blocks now have sprinkler installations commissioned. The remaining seven tower blocks will have sprinklers fitted by the mid 2021/22; however, this will be subject to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and customer access.

SHG's waste management framework recycled 75 per cent per cent of its waste and sent 25 per cent to energy recovery last year, completely avoiding landfill. In addition, it supported community engagement in clean up and recycling initiatives through neighbourhood clear-outs.

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<sup>21</sup> Saving an average of £1,000

<sup>22</sup> Fit income generated between April and December 2020. Final quarter isn't available until June due to validation and billing time frames

SHG carries out a cyclical programme of estate inspections across the Borough, which enables issues such as fly tipping and other hazards to be identified and addressed. It reduces the impact on the environment, reduces the likelihood of vermin infestations, and makes open spaces on estates safer and more attractive. The Environmental Services team has a team dedicated to remove fly tipping and bulky waste, which supports estate management. This in turn reduces the pressure on the Council services.

In 2020/21 SHG continued to maintain a variety of quality green spaces with high levels of customer satisfaction, with 91 per cent satisfaction with the grounds maintenance service. It worked with Stockport Council to improve play areas and make improvements to play spaces in Bridgehall and Adswood. A Tree planting programme was completed in partnership with Stockport Council and City of Trees across eleven locations in the borough.

### **Communities in Stockport will be safe, resilient and inclusive**

SHG is a key partner in the Council's safeguarding work. This includes various working groups that support the Stockport Safeguarding Children Board, the Safeguarding Adults Board and a dedicated staffing resource provided to work within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub (MASSH) which supports families with complex needs. SHG' MASSH representative helps prevent cases of families with complex needs escalating to statutory Social Care intervention stage and gives housing advice and guidance on others. During 2020/21, this post holder provided information to 68 enquirers, this is lower than in previous years due to the role being vacant for a period combined with the impact of the pandemic and many services accessing the MASSH working differently. A range of outcomes were achieved, including: tenancy sustainment, improved health and well-being, increased school attendance, parenting support and prevention of escalation into Children's Social Care and Child Protection processes.

SHG plays a key role in the Safer Stockport Partnership (SSP). It has contributed significantly to strategic thinking and service delivery by working with partners to map trends and develop plans. At an operational level, 2020/21 saw several partnership projects to tackle anti-social behaviour. For example, SHG became a key member of the Pandemic Response Team which consisted of key organisations including Stockport Council, Greater Manchester Police and Public Health. The group held weekly meetings to assess data on Covid-19 cases across Stockport so it could agree on how to support residents, businesses, schools and other establishments to change behaviours and be Covid-19 secure while following the new restrictions responsibly. SHG also worked closely with Greater Manchester Police and Stockport Council to tackle issues of serious youth disorder in Brinnington in late autumn 2020. It resulted in enforcement action to obtain injunctions against young people involved int the most serious incidents whilst carrying out youth engagement work with other young people to divert them away from antisocial behaviour.

Although further development of Stockport's Place based work paused during the pandemic, SHG continued to support the Council's Place Based Integration (PBI) work through dedicated staffing resources and office space in a community building. The PBI approach continues to enable a wide range of agencies to share information, identify issues and collectively agree the most appropriate intervention

which will engage people at an early stage, implement short and timely interventions, engage people in relevant universal services and resources and prevent escalation to high cost, reactive statutory services.

SHG continued its partnership work on a wide range of health-related projects in 2020/21. Its counselling service for tenants and TPA customers was delivered by the charity Talk Listen Change (TLC) and provided eight new students and ten existing ones with high quality placements and 253 individuals with counselling. 1,516 counselling sessions were provided across the year.

Other work included a partnership with Acorn Recovery which provides four shared three-bedroom properties with support for people abstaining from substance misuse to help them prepare for secure stable accommodation and get into long term volunteering and employment. Similarly, a service level agreement is in place with Stockport Council to provide properties for people with learning disabilities.

In 2019, Stockport Council transferred its ASB Service to SHG, simplifying the approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour in residential areas and enabling the Council to make savings in a way that does not impact on front line services. During 2020/21, SHG has dealt with 196 cases in the private sector, compared to 91 the year before, successfully resolving 100 per cent of closed cases in an average of 32 calendar days, compared to 42 the year before. Customer satisfaction with the outcome of the case at the point of closure was recorded at 100 per cent over the period.

There was a range of initiatives to enhance the safety of neighbourhoods during the last year, including 'target hardening' work for 212 customers experiencing ASB. SHG was proactive in serving 45 Community Protection Warnings with the majority used to tackle Covid related ASB and four Community Protection Notices on behalf of the Council and taking out 44 injunctions and undertakings to address 'hotspot' issues. By recognising the individual needs of perpetrators and victims, Positive Engagement Officers (PEOs) supported 83 new referrals in 2020/21 of chaotic drug and alcohol users and people with mental health or anger management issues to help them sustain their tenancies. In total 90 cases were successfully closed during the year without the need for legal action and increase compared to 69 the year before. This contributed to reducing spend on legal action by £191,352 compared to anticipated spend. This approach has contributed to sustainable changes in behaviour, with all having stopped causing nuisance altogether as a result of this specialist support.

SHG has a strong commitment to safeguarding public assets. Its housing fraud initiative, for example, helps to ensure that people in the greatest housing need can access social housing by making best use of its asset base. In 2020/21, SHG prevented 20 Right to Buy bids moving beyond the application stage, potentially preventing the loss of public assets worth £2,962,291.60<sup>23</sup>. SHG also recovered 16 properties following investigations into fraudulent use. This is a potential saving of

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<sup>23</sup> Calculated using the average value of properties sold in 2020/21

£372,000<sup>24</sup>. In addition, prevented two fraudulent applicants from obtaining social housing, potentially saving £6,480<sup>25</sup>. These cases have all been handled by internal resources without incurring external court costs.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented challenges to the way services were delivered during the year, particularly where processes were subject to social distancing requirements. Relets times, for example, were affected by the requirement for works to be completed sequentially rather than having multiple operatives in a property at the same time. However, services adapted to meet those challenges and many areas were operating at pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year. The repairs service, for example, was completing routine and emergency repairs at year-end that reflected pre-pandemic volumes. Similarly, the ability to manage health and safety compliance indicators, such as gas safety certificates, was maintained while taking account of customers that were classed as clinically vulnerable or shielding. Where certification was not possible a risk-based approach was undertaken, and new appointments rescheduled. This has resulted in full compliance on statutory health and safety compliance indicators at year-end.

Other services have met the challenge of Covid-19 with improved levels of performance and service delivery. The Pantries have adapted to customer needs by changing the way it delivers goods during the pandemic, with 2,792 deliveries direct to customer homes. The ASB Service made proactive contact with victims and survivors of domestic abuse from the six prior to the pandemic, on the guidance of Stockport Without Abuse. Satisfaction with the outcomes of antisocial behaviour (ASB) cases averaged 99.6 per cent and satisfaction with the outcomes of repairs that could be competed was 99.7 per cent and, which are both exceptionally high. Estate inspections indicated that 98.8 per cent of neighbourhoods were maintained to a good or excellent standard. The effect of the pandemic on the financial situation of customers was recognised and support was provided through services such as money advice, which has assisted customers applying for Universal Credit. The rents service has worked closely with customers to provide support, with rent collection and arrears indicators remaining positive during the year. Customer satisfaction remained high during the year, with customers expressing 98.4 per cent satisfaction with SHG as a landlord and 97.6 per cent with the quality of their homes. These outcomes evidence SHG's ongoing commitment to listening to and supporting customers throughout the pandemic.

The Government launched 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper' in December 2020. The White Paper aims to ensure that social housing residents have positive experiences in their communities, in their homes, and with their landlord and introduces a new seven-point Charter that will be

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<sup>24</sup> The Cabinet Office estimates a cost of £23,250 per property recovered based on annual costs of temporary accommodation, costs of recovery and re-letting. National Fraud Initiative Report 4 November 2016. Due to inflation this cost may be higher, however there has been no updated figure released

<sup>25</sup> Based on a calculation developed by the Cabinet Office due to annual costs of temporary accommodation, they estimate £3240 per application removed from the waiting list (National Fraud Initiative Report 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2018)

enforced through the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards. The White Paper builds on the Government's commitment on building safety, its funding of affordable housing, and to encouraging home ownership. SHG discussed the implications of the White Paper at its Wider Leadership Team and Board in early 2021 and developed an action plan based on the proposals. In many cases SHG is already meeting the requirements because it has a good record of investing in areas such as fire safety, property maintenance, customer engagement, complaints management, and neighbourhoods. However, there are new and additional requirements in the White Paper and SHG has taken steps to make changes to meet new requirements where details are available. It approved a new Customer Feedback Policy in December 2020 to meet obligations in the White Paper and a linked Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice for example. SHG is in dialogue with the Council about new responsible, accountable and designated person requirements and developing an assurance framework to set out how those responsibilities can be met. It will continue to understand and implement changes as details emerge.

Customers hold the organisation to account in a range of ways. They are involved in formulating policies and strategies, monitoring service delivery and working with staff to make spending decisions. Examples of this in 2020/21 included:

- Gaining views from customers during the Covid-19 pandemic to understand needs and requirement, which received over 1,000 responses.
- Consulted on the aims of the new five-year Delivery Plan, which included a video that elicited a significant number of responses.
- The Investment Team consulted with the Customer Scrutiny Panel on the letters sent out to customers. The panel advised that they were happy with the letters, but suggested areas for improvement. The team have implemented changes based on the feedback from the panel.
- The Greenspace survey has been updated to include a question about customer involvement and keeping customers informed of changes. There have also been 50 customers added to the list to become a Green Inspector.
- Temporary accommodation customers provided feedback that contributed to a review of the Homelessness Strategy. Customers had said that information about accessing the service was confusing, so more work has been done to improve this, for example, working with partners to seek clarity for customers about how to access the service and apply for housing.
- The Customer Finance Team carried out a Covid-19 survey to gauge customers' views on changes made within the service, in which customers were transferred to self-serve payments due to office closure. Customers were satisfied with the self-serve option overall, however based on the feedback, the Customer Finance Team will be issuing more guidance to help customers and provide a range of options.
- As customers have expressed interest in knowing more about the mutual exchange service and available properties, current available properties will be advertised in the reception area. This will enable customers to see information about the properties and contact the Property Management team for more information if interested.
- The Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) reviewed two services: Programme Delivery and the One Number service during the year and made recommendations for further improvements. The Customer Monitoring Group

meets three times per year to review corporate performance reports and financial reports. It provides comments, which are provided to the Councillors who monitor SHG's performance at its Member Committee.