

Progress Housing Group annual review for Fylde Borough Council 2015-16

Following a Governance review by the Group it was agreed that the National Housing Federation model rules 2015 would be adopted which means that Board members are recruited through open advertisement and based on the skills and knowledge required at the time. This means that there is no longer any local authority nominated representatives on the Board. As agreed with Fylde Borough Council, an annual report has been provided to update on key activities and achievements of the Group over the past financial year.

2015-16 presented many challenges to the housing sector resulting in plans to achieve greater efficiencies whilst continuing to meet our strategic objectives.

In May 2015 Progress Housing Group launched its 2020 Business Plan, providing a framework for our work in all areas of our business. This set out 6 strategic objectives:

1. Provide more and better homes
2. Support individuals and communities to achieve independence
3. Create opportunities
4. Work as one team to ensure we all contribute to our business achievements
5. Develop a stronger organisation to deliver maximum results
6. Put customers at the heart of what we do to ensure our decisions are driven by customers' needs and aspirations

1. Provide more and better homes

In 2015/16 we developed 106 new homes for general needs and supported living tenants and spent £7.1m on responsive and planned maintenance and £4m on investment and major repairs.

The average amount spent for responsive and cyclical repairs was £741 per property.

In 15/16 Progress Housing group delivered the following improvement works in the Fylde BC area;

- 65 kitchen replacements
- 26 bathroom replacements
- 77 Gas Central Heating replacements
- 12 Electric Heating replacements
- 6 roof replacements
- 2 full electrical re-wires

All our homes meet or exceed the decent homes standard.

Development strategy

Progress Housing Group has a development strategy for the period 2015 to 2020 which is set within the context of the government's 2015 summer budget including rental cuts which are to be applied in the four years commencing 1 April 2016.

Progress Housing Group is committed to delivering a development programme that meets the needs and demands of its existing and future customers.

In the period to 2020, development and new business will focus on key areas which are an existing strength of the organisation both in terms of historic development success and on-going managerial expertise. These are:

- Affordable Housing (including homes let at Affordable Rents and Formula Rents)
- Housing for Sale (intermediate housing to include shared ownership, housing for outright sale and equity products)
- Supported Housing (specialist accommodation for individuals with a range of support needs)
- Housing for the elderly
- Keyworker accommodation

Within 2015/16 we developed a number of properties which came into management and were let within the year including 14 units at Lord Street, and 4 at St Michael's Close. A number of schemes have been considered in the Fylde area within the year which includes potential S106 sites at Bridgeside and Heyhouses in Lytham as well as a development opportunity at Lower Lane. We have also been seeking an alternative site to replace the Clifton Drive development.

Progress Housing Group is an active member of the Whyndyke Garden Village, working collaboratively to develop and design innovative solutions that can be introduced not only at Whyndyke, but in existing and other future developments.

2. Support individuals and communities to achieve independence

Progress Housing Group is one of the UK's largest providers of supported living, providing accommodation for people with learning disabilities or mental health needs and in 2015/16 were shortlisted for a 3rd Sector Care Award for the second year running for community garden initiatives. Five supported living schemes in Lancashire also received North West in Bloom awards for community food growing.

PHG continues to support over 300 supported living tenants within Lancashire. Staff work closely with local authority commissioners to ensure tenants are able to live independently within their community. A Lancashire Forum, made up of supported living tenants across Lancashire, meets on a bi monthly basis to discuss housing and tenancy issues and to suggest service improvements. Tenants were also involved in helping PHG to develop a new website, ensuring that it is easy to navigate for tenants with support needs.

Last year we completed 795 aids and adaptations to enable tenants to continue to live independent lives. 164 of these were in the Fylde area, costing £65, 090. Satisfaction with this service remains high with 98% of tenants in Fylde being satisfied with the service received.

Progress Housing Group continues to provide independent living accommodation despite significant reductions in supporting people funding within the year. We carried out a review of this service within 2015/16 leading to a new approach to delivering support within our independent living schemes from March 2016. Further consideration is being given to delivery of support services within independent living with the likely withdrawal of supporting people funding from April 2017.

Our Progress Lifeline Service continues to grow in numbers and we are now supporting over 13,000 customers to live independently in their own homes. We receive approximately 292,000 calls per annum.

This year there has been an increase in interest in our home response service. We have extended the service to include the falls lifting service and are now supporting residential care homes to lift residents when they have fallen and are uninjured. We have established effective working arrangements with falls prevention services to make referrals.

Our Progress Lifeline, Telecare service has been successfully appointed as the service provider for the Lancashire County Council Telecare service.

We also provide the monitoring service for the Peace of Mind for Carers service, an emergency support service for informal carers across Lancashire. This service has grown to over 8,000 customers in 2016.

3. Creating Opportunities

The Groups Progress Futures initiative adopts a person centred approach to work with individuals to help them achieve their own personal goals in terms of entering training, education, volunteering or employment. During 2015/16 the team have worked with 111 customers of which 37 have gone into employment, learning or work experience. Internally we have created trainee and apprenticeship opportunities, offering 8 individuals employment opportunities during 2015/16. Progress Housing Group were TPAS Northern Regional winners at this year's awards for Excellence in Employment Skills and Training Award.

We continue to deliver a range of involvement opportunities that enable us to engage with our customers to gain their views on the work we do as well as helping them to achieve their own individual targets and developing communities. Over the last twelve months we have continued to hold specialist forum and panel meetings that have allowed staff to directly consult with customers on the services they receive. We continue to support a number of community associations and work at a local level to help them build sustainable communities, empowering them to take ownership of community assets that offer a valuable facility for the whole community to use. This links in to our community capacity building programme, as we have developed a detailed selection of training courses that are delivered at a local level that aim to provide our customers and the communities in which they live with a range of both educational and practical skills, increasing the opportunities available to them.

4. One team

Progress Housing Group prides itself in its one team approach and the investment made to train and develop staff to deliver excellent services for our customers. In 2015/16 we invested more than £130 000 in staff training. Our staff have worked jointly to deliver services a new, more efficient way as we have undergone a number of service reviews. This now means that we have specialist teams working across the Group to deliver Community Safety, Income Collection, Neighbourhoods, Leasehold and Community Involvement services. This has developed the knowledge and expertise across the Group to deliver services our customers want and need.

5. Stronger organisation

The housing sector faced unprecedented challenges in the last year which have impacted on every area of our business. The introduction of the rent reductions resulted in a projected loss of £9million of income over the next year and the continued implementation of Welfare Reforms puts further pressure on future income streams.

To mitigate these financial challenges, we have accelerated our review of services to realise efficiency savings through the staffing structures as well as new information technology, whilst still delivering effective services. Last year we extended our use of mobile and agile working, enabling our staff to spend more time in the community with customers, whilst remaining connected to our core business systems. Over 120 staff are now mobile working with a further 100 working in an agile way.

Within the year Progress Housing group launched a new website which was a collaborative project with customer at the heart of its design and set up. This has increased digital engagement with customers and resulted in a significant boost in customer self service, such as payments online and repairs reporting. Live web chat has also been introduced and easier ways for customers to sign in have been introduced.

We continue to maximise income to the organisation through management of arrears. In 15/16 PHG current tenant arrears were 4.2%, an improvement on the previous year, despite the continued implementation of welfare reforms. Progress Housing Group has an under occupancy officer working with customers to find alternative accommodation or assisting with Discretionary Housing Payment applications. The Financial inclusion team have worked with 307 tenants over the year, helping tenants to maximise their income (£344 000 of benefit income including £109 000 housing benefit entitlement) as well as reducing rent arrears.

6. Customers at the Heart

Progress Housing Group scrutiny pool carried out six service area reviews in 2015/16 making 23 recommendations for improvement.

Involvement of customers in our service is key to the delivery of effective services. Over the year we have supported a number of customers through our scrutiny services to be involved in monitoring services provided. This includes green inspectors, voids inspectors, mystery shopping, digital and energy champions as well as involvement on operational tenant forums to consult and inform service reviews.

We work in partnership with a number of organisations to ensure that our services deliver outcomes expected by our customers. In 2015/16 we managed 534 cases of antisocial behaviour, with 97.5% satisfied with the service provided.

Within the year we have been developing a social value strategy for the organisation to demonstrate the added value our services provide. This sets out a number of pledges made by the Group and a framework to deliver and measure social value across a number of business areas. We won second place in the B&Q Social Value fund awards, securing £3000 to deliver a project that adds value to the lives of our customers.