

Women's Pioneer Housing

Annual Review 2021



About us

Our Vision

Making a positive difference to women's lives

Our Mission

We provide homes and services which offer a springboard to independent women to achieve their potential. We aim to influence others to do the same.

Our Strategic Objectives

- Providing high quality homes and services
- Supporting our residents' independence and well-being
- Growing locally to provide more homes
- Being a leading voice for women's housing
- Developing our organisational strength



798

General needs homes



182

Homes for older women



31

Market rent homes



90

Leasehold properties



41

Staff



£7.9m

Turnover

Boroughs we operate in

22

Westminster

52

Wandsworth

733

Kensington & Chelsea

18

Hillingdon

20

Harrow

193

Hammersmith & Fullham

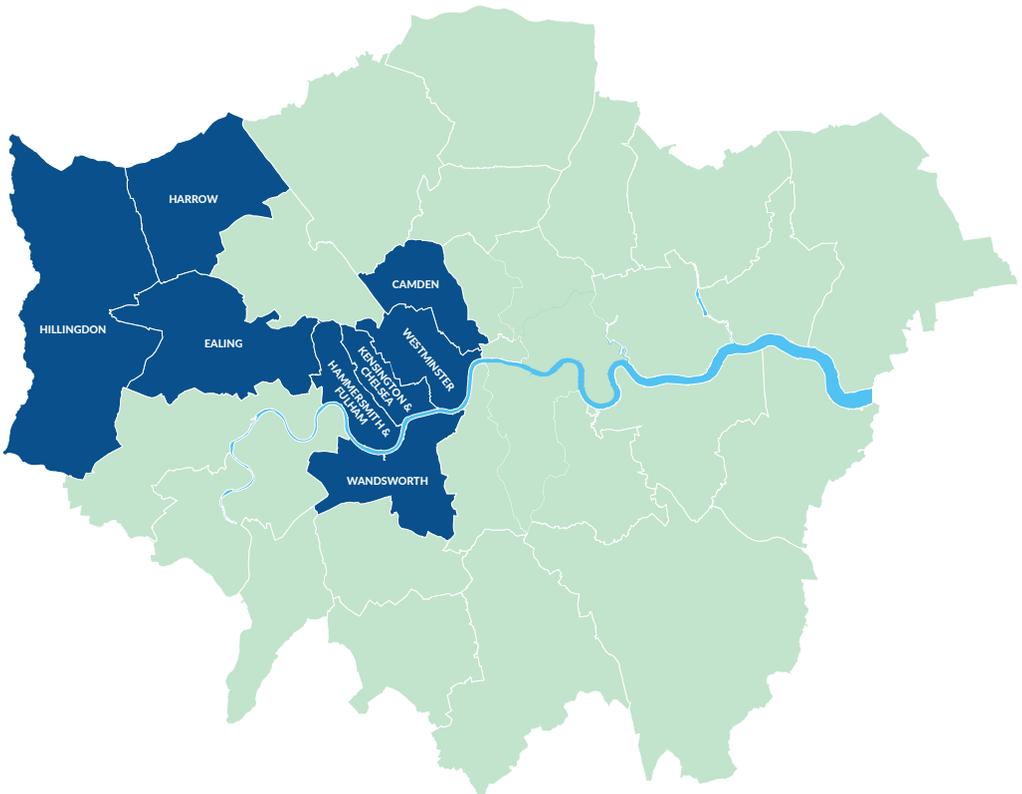
39

Ealing

24

Camden

Total = 1101



Chair and CEO welcome



Kim Vernau

Chair



Tracey Downie

CEO

Throughout 2021 and despite the challenges of Covid-19, our strong commitment to creating the right environment for residents to thrive, helped us to deliver many of the events and activities that had been postponed in 2020.

Resident engagement and ensuring our residents were increasingly involved in decision-making, remained a key feature throughout 2021 so it was great to implement more of our ambitions to strengthen resident engagement.

This included developing a new Resident Engagement Strategy in partnership with residents and holding our first Resident Action Forum that took place in September.

Residents told us that our policies and procedures did not always meet expectations and our Resident Action Forum was an opportunity to address that. Over 30 residents joined staff to review our approaches to managing anti-social behaviour and letting our empty properties. The sessions resulted in improvements to our policies and processes and reflect the recommendations made by residents.

Board welcomed the new Homes and Services Committee (HASC), which has been formed as part of the governance model for WPH. HASC will be reviewing the policies and performance that impact residents' lives and supporting the Resident Engagement Scrutiny Panel (RESP).

RESP continued its incredible work with staff, guiding and advising us on the issues that matter most to residents. Thank you to our RESP members who tirelessly advocate for residents and work alongside us to create a service that reflects residents' aspirations.

Thank you also to Claire Bellingier, who resigned from the Board last year, and our resident Board member Caroline Portsmouth who stood down at the end of the year but who continues to contribute through the Homes and Services Committee. Caroline and Claire's contributions to Board have been invaluable. We will recruit three new resident Board members in 2022 to ensure residents continue to be a key part of our decision-making processes.

Our postponed centenary celebrations took place in October. We welcomed over 80 residents who joined us to celebrate our Founders' work and commitment to providing good quality homes for single women across London. In 2021 we increased the number of homes modernised through our kitchen and bathroom upgrades and created additional homes through our 'Hidden Homes' project.

We are incredibly proud of our planned developments at Wood Lane and Brook House. These continued to gather momentum during 2021 as we worked alongside local residents and stakeholders to ensure our development plans for these schemes met local needs.



Chair and CEO welcome

The socio-economic impact of Covid-19 has been greater on women and next year, as we mitigate more challenges, we will be working hard to highlight gender inequalities and create more opportunities to improve the lives of women across London.

We will also continue to extend opportunities for resident engagement and work with partners to deliver our key objectives. We are excited about our future and proud of our achievements during 2021.

Of course, all our achievements this year and in future years are only made possible through the commitment of our staff, Board and volunteers. We are extremely grateful to all for the hard work delivered throughout 2021 and look forward to continued success for 2022.



Chair of RESP welcome



Andrea Fraser

Chair of RESP

It's fair to say 2021 continued to be a difficult year for everyone, as we all sought to rise to the challenge of the various lockdowns. But I am pleased to report that, during this time, the RESP still managed to create a new Resident Engagement Strategy to steer WPH's resident involvement activities.

This strategy included the introduction of our new Homes and Services Committee, which will ensure residents are able to make decisions about WPH's policies and service approach for repairs and housing management.

We ran a Resident Action Forum, which I am pleased many of you attended, and we are delighted to have welcomed two new RESP members who joined after meeting us that day.

We also welcome our new CEO, Tracey Downie, and look forward to continuing to work with her and WPH in 2022.

Providing high quality homes and services

76%

of our residents were satisfied overall with our services

This places us in the top 25% of small London based providers.

“My housing officer is marvellous. He is a breath of fresh air and has been so supportive for me.”

78%

of our residents were satisfied with our repairs and maintenance service

This places us in the top 25% of small, London-based providers.

“Extremely satisfied! The person who came to do the repair was amazing and explained everything he was doing.”

97.4%

of repairs were completed on time

4,747

Repairs completed to your homes in 2021





Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we were able to complete over 97% of repairs on time. This has been achieved largely through the co-operation of residents in being available to provide access. We received this positive feedback from residents:

“The plumbing contractor completed the job in 10 minutes. That’s not a complaint, I’m very impressed”

“The contractor was very polite, professional and courteous”

During 2021 we renewed our Asset Management Strategy. This used data collected through stock condition surveys and inspections to analyse the needs of existing and future residents.

In particular, the strategy ensures we meet the requirements of new fire safety and building regulations legislation, and confirms we are working towards meeting targets set by the government’s climate agenda, such as ensuring our homes are as energy efficient as possible.

We have also committed to replacing kitchens every 20 years and bathrooms every 30 years.

Providing high quality homes and services

During 2021 we invested significantly in safety works across our buildings. We worked with residents to ensure our homes are safe by completing fire risk assessments, annual gas safety checks and water safety risk assessments on time. We appreciate residents' co-operation in enabling us to complete these vital checks.

We also completed safety works in Dain Court and 25 Collingham Gardens, including removing asbestos and improving fire safety measures.

In our older women's housing we started a fire alarm upgrade and updated all the warden call systems.

We converted the water supply in Pioneer Way to the mains, reducing the inconvenience of servicing cold water storage tanks above the flats.



82%

of our residents were satisfied that their home is safe and secure





69%

of our residents were satisfied with the quality of their home

Our target is for 80% of our residents to feel satisfied with the quality of their home, so we are working to improve in this area. We are continuing to improve your homes with our kitchen and bathroom replacement programme. We have also revised our transfer policy and increased the number of responsive repairs we carry out.



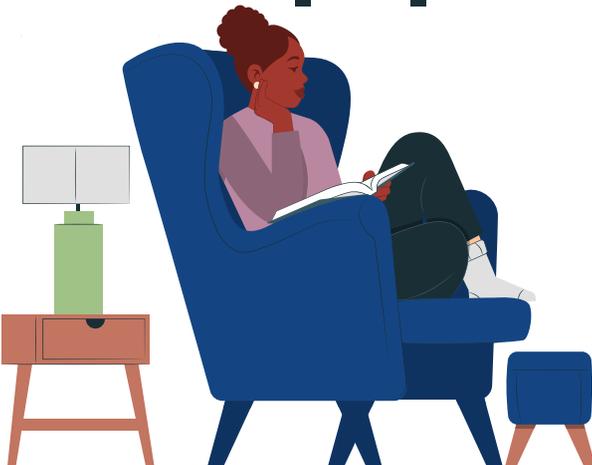
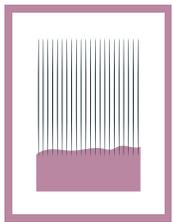
57

kitchens were completed in 2021 (compared to 69 in 2020 and 36 in 2019)



76

bathrooms were completed in 2021 (compared to 56 in 2020 and 36 in 2019)



Floods in West London

In July 2021 an unprecedented amount of rain fell on West London. This led to the Victorian sewer system, which was never designed to cope with such a volume of water, failing and hundreds of flats being flooded in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

12 of our residents were displaced from their homes due to their homes being flooded. Having offered all these residents temporary accommodation in the Hilton Hotel, we worked with emergency accommodation providers to source private rental homes to house everyone in their local area while we established what needed to be done to refurbish their flats.

Some tenants returned to their homes within a few months, while others took up new tenancies elsewhere with Women's Pioneer. Due to the significant water damage in some flats, work to refurbish them is ongoing.

COMPLAINTS

We encourage feedback about our services and welcome the opportunity for us to put things right when they have gone wrong. In January 2021 we published a new Complaints Policy. This makes the process of complaining simpler and easier for residents, as well as aligning with the Housing Ombudsman's code of practice. The Housing Ombudsman reviewed a small number of our complaints last year and was happy with our responses.

We reduced the stages of a complaint from three to two but ensured issues were still dealt with by senior managers. We resolved 71% of complaints at stage 1 and ensure we review the lessons learned from our complaints every six months.

39

of complaints were received in 2021 compared to 29 complaints in 2020

Resident's voice

We aim for satisfaction to be higher. However, this does put us in the top quartile of smaller London landlords.



62%

of residents were satisfied that we listen and act on their views

In 2021 we developed our new Resident Engagement Strategy in partnership with the Resident Engagement and Scrutiny Panel (RESP). It sets out how residents can be involved in our services.

We would like to thank RESP members for all their hard work and involvement in developing this strategy.



**Turn your
ideas into
a reality**

**The
Invention
Room**

Resident's voice



LEAD

We set up a new Homes and Services Committee, which is a sub-committee of the main Board and has delegated decision-making authority on policies covering homes and services. We held the first meeting of the committee in November 2021.



FEEDBACK

Every quarter we survey our residents on satisfaction with our services. Each year 400 residents are surveyed. We use their comments to shape our services and make improvements.



COLLABORATE

In 2021 we held our first Resident Action Forum, looking at our Allocations and Lettings Policy and Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Over 30 residents attended and we incorporated their views into designing our new policies, due to be published in 2022.



BEING AWARE

Despite a difficult year due to the pandemic, we published our Pioneer Press newsletters which were circulated to all residents. Our website has also continued to be updated.



CHIP IN

Throughout the year residents shared their views and feedback on our services.



VIEWS

62% of residents were satisfied that we listen and act on their views

Supporting our residents' independence and wellbeing



85%

of residents were satisfied their home maintains their independence and wellbeing

over 2,000

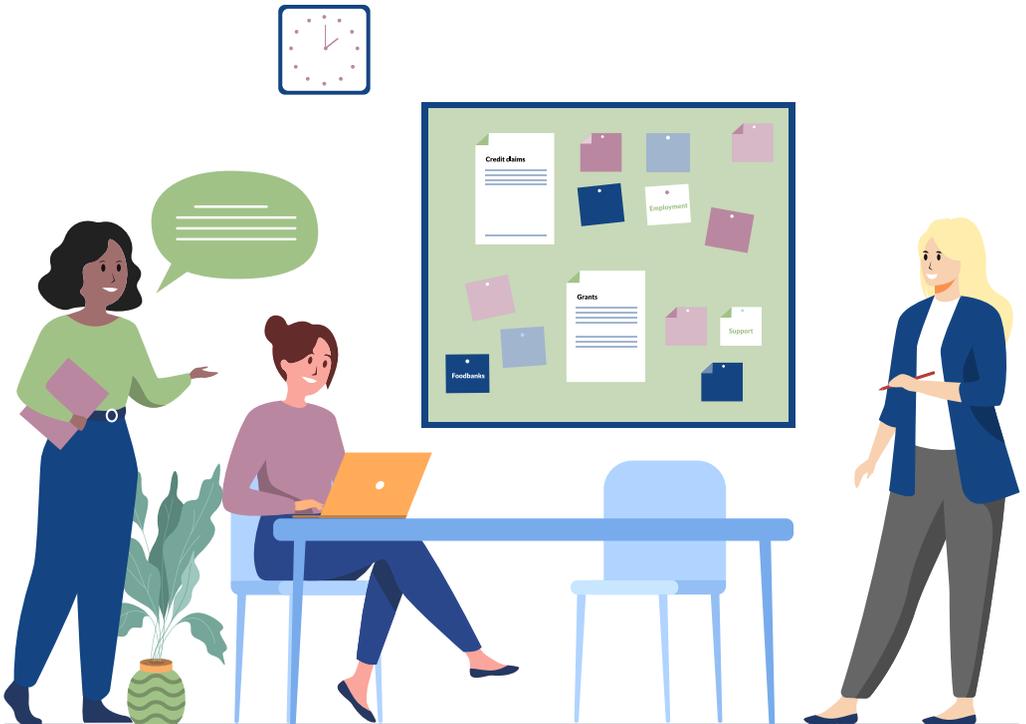
welfare calls were made to residents during the pandemic.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Our Financial Inclusion Officer worked with over 200 tenants to help them maintain their Universal Credit claims, receive everything they were entitled to and apply for grants and other support.

In one case, we helped a resident secure £11,000 in backdated disability benefits.

We also work closely with independent debt advisors, food banks and employment and training services to ensure our residents receive the support they need.





Growing locally to provide more homes

WOOD LANE

This development will provide new homes and offices at our current address in Wood Lane. The scheme will include affordable homes for rent to single women who would otherwise find it difficult to access the housing market.

The project experienced a setback when the council unexpectedly withdrew its support, citing objections from some local people. We listened to those objections, spoke to over 500 residents and made some amendments to the design of the building.

We worked with our development partner, Hub, to reduce the height of the tall building from 29 floors to 18. This reduces the number of affordable homes we can deliver, so we propose to build 60 affordable flats and a slightly smaller office than originally planned.

As a result of feedback, we have also redesigned windows, reduced light pollution, improved access to Pioneer Way and aim to create an area for people waiting for buses.

We will submit our revised planning application in 2022.

BROOK HOUSE

Brook House is a block of small flats, built in the 1920s. We have begun consulting with residents on how we can improve their homes. We hope to replace the existing 39 flats with around 100 homes for affordable rent. All homes will be spacious and dual aspect, and the building will have a lift.

We are working in partnership with L&Q Housing to deliver this project and will continue to consult with residents on the new building's design and their housing options over the coming years.

NORMAN COURT

We spent 2021 adding nine new flats to Norman Court, in Wandsworth. Part of our 'Hidden Homes' programme, this has added an extra floor to the existing building.

The new homes, which are all dual aspect and over 37sqm, comprise seven one-bedroom flats and two studio apartments.

We will let these flats in 2022 at market rent until we have paid back the £3.1 million loan we took out to create them, then we will let them at lower rents.

Being a leading voice for women's housing

We appeared in three journal articles and attended 13 conferences and seminars, publicising WPH's role in promoting women's issues in housing.

A small cohort of dedicated volunteers have produced a large amount of new, high quality, detailed research which tells the story of WPH – how it was initially financed and established, how the organisation grew, and how it impacted on the lives of women – with a new section on the WPH website dedicated to our history.

This historically significant WPH archive is now housed and conserved at the London Metropolitan Archives. With the collection catalogued and key items digitised, it is now publicly accessible to researchers for the first time. As well as raising the profile of women's role in social housing, the project has also raised our profile outside the sector.

WPH's first film, 'Pioneering Courage: The Women's Pioneer Housing Story', was included as part of the Citizens project led by the Royal Holloway University of London.

This three-year project explored, researched and mapped the history of liberty, protest, rebellion and reform. It also featured in the 'Beyond the Ballot' FutureLearn online course, with over 3,000 enrolments.



As part of our history project, WPH staff hosted two free online public talks and discussions in June 2021 – ‘Building Modern Lives: Interwar Feminism, Women’s Networks and the Media’ and ‘A Feminist Agenda for Housing’. These were highly successful, attended by a total of 80 people.

Dr Gillian Murphy, from the London School of Economics’ Women’s Library, supported the project and invited WPH to contribute to Time and Tide magazine’s centenary.

In 2021 we held our annual Founders’ Day event, marking our 101st birthday. Around 100 residents, staff and stakeholders joined us to celebrate WPH’s history and enjoy a respite from rolling lockdowns.

The event included a performance by the Colombian Women’s Dance Troupe, along with songs and art presentations by our residents and staff. It ended with a steel band and dancing into the night.



Developing our organisational strength

LETTINGS



52

completed lettings
in 2021

In 2021 we let homes through a mixture of virtual and face-to-face viewings, as government guidance and pandemic restrictions changed during the year.



19

transfers

We work hard to help as many existing residents in need of a move to find a property that is right for them. We have over 200 tenants on our transfer list, which means many wait a long time for a home to become available.

A resident who moved from a studio to a one-bedroom flat took the time to write us a letter, thanking us for the impact and improvement it has made on her life.



10

homes let through
referral agencies

WPH partners with organisations across London to provide homes for single women who would otherwise be unable to access them.

We worked with IKWRO (Iranian Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation) to house three women who had all married young and escaped unimaginable violence. These women bonded in the IKWRO refuge, so we moved them all to one of our converted schemes to maintain their support network with each other. Since then, one has gone on to study and two are being supported to look for work.



21

homes let through the waiting list

We run a public waiting list for studio flats, available to women who earn less than £40,000 a year and can't access affordable housing through their local authority. In April 2021 we opened the list and had a total of 108 applicants

We offered a number of our homes to local authorities

We have agreements with a number of local authorities to allocate 50% of our one-bedroom and studio 'true void' flats to people on their housing lists. A 'true void' is a flat which has become vacant due to a death or the tenant moving on. A 'non-true void' is a flat which becomes available due to a transfer.

RENT COLLECTION

We ended 2020 with 4.01% arrears and our 2021 target was 3.5%. 2021 continued to be a difficult year for rent collection, as the economic difficulties facing the country were also faced by our residents. Like many other organisations, WPH also had issues with staff sickness and absence. We aim to reduce rent arrears in 2022 to 3.5% and improve our collection rates. All income received through our rents is spent on providing high quality homes and services for our residents.

Our rent arrears at the end of 2021 were

4.01%

PAY RENT



Service improvements

Early in 2021 we invested in a new phone system so residents could be transferred easily to the right person, even when staff were working from home. This system records all calls, which helps us handle complaints.

We created and launched a new rent statement, which should make reading balances and understanding payments much easier. We also automated leaseholder statements.



Women's Pioneer Homes

WPH has a subsidiary called Women's Pioneer Homes, which lets flats at market rent levels. A few years ago the government announced a rent cut to social housing tenancies. Although this was a small amount on each tenancy, it put our 30-year financial plan under strain.

We wanted to find a way to mitigate that income loss while continuing to invest in our properties through projects such as the kitchen and bathroom programme. We decided to set up a subsidiary, which is a separate company under the umbrella company of Women's Pioneer Housing, to let small studio flats to private renters.

In 2021 we let 21 flats through Women's Pioneer Homes. In order to let a flat through this subsidiary, it has to be below modern space standards of 37sqm and be a home our residents have found difficult to live in.

Women's Pioneer Homes' income is donated to WPH and we use it to help fund our kitchen and bathroom programme.



21

market rent homes



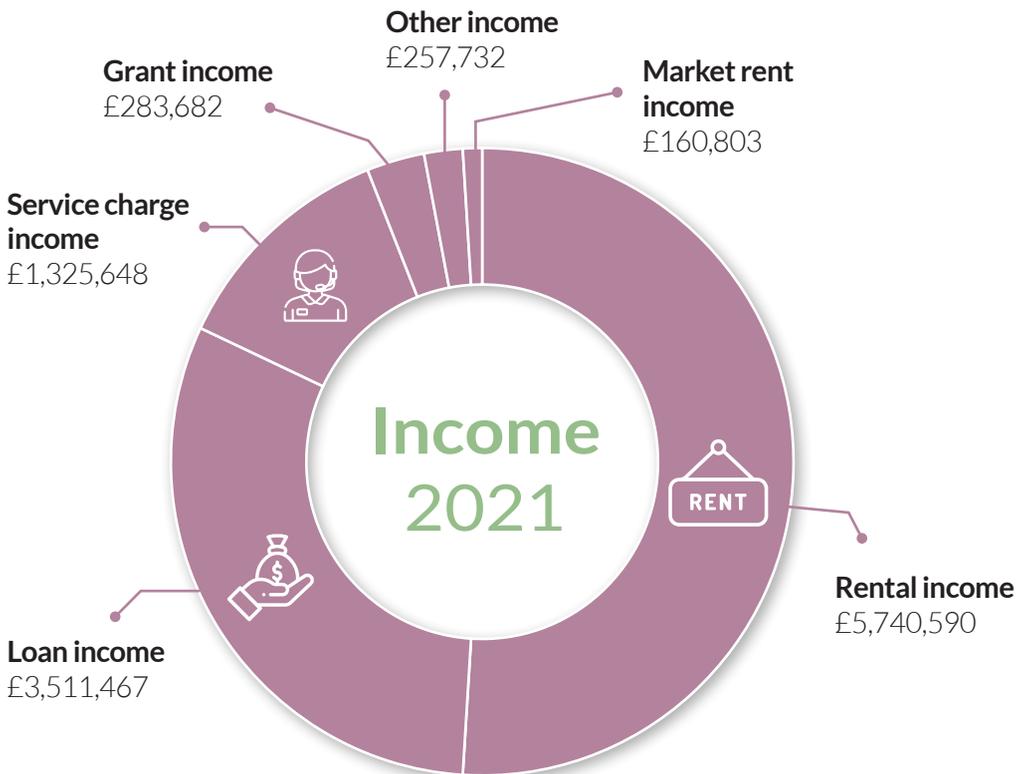
£328,000

income from market rented homes

Organisational finances

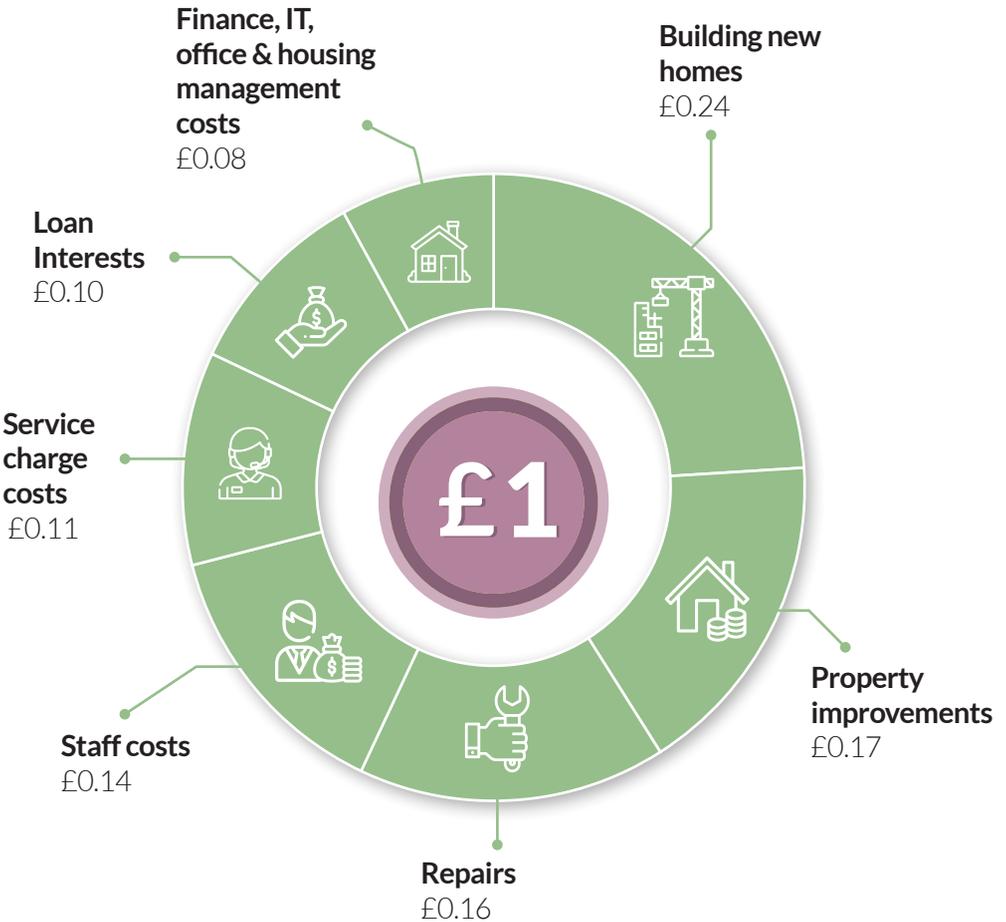
Our main source of income is from social housing lettings, comprising rent and service charges paid by our residents. However, as we have been investing heavily in developing new homes and improving existing properties, we require additional income from other sources.

Therefore, during 2021, we borrowed £3.5 million from our lenders which will need to be paid back over the long term. Market rent income has also helped contribute towards these activities.



In 2021 we reported a surplus £1.7m (see statement of comprehensive income on the following page). £1.4m of this related to an accounting exercise in revaluing some of our properties that are now let at market rent. No money was received as a result of this. The surplus from usual activities was £300k.

This is how each £1 of income is spent



Organisational finances

5 YEARS TRENDS FOR THE GROUP

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Statement of Comprehensive Income	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income from social lettings	6,970	6,860	6,721	6,810	7,068
Income from other lettings	496	587	575	375	132
Other activities	172	248	1,118	663	596
Amortised Social Housing Grant	284	272	263	245	408
Total Turnover	7,922	7,967	8,677	8,093	8,204
Operating costs	(6,478)	(6,485)	(7,362)	(6,772)	(6,906)
Gain on disposal of properties	-	-	170	-	141
Movement in value of investment properties	1,420	121	(410)	(90)	2,062
Operating surplus	2,864	1,603	1,075	1,231	3,501
Net interest payable	(1,138)	(957)	(969)	(892)	(954)
Surplus transferred to reserves	1,726	646	106	339	2,624
Statement of Financial Position	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Housing Properties net of depreciation	63,574	62,383	61,574	61,679	60,259
Investment Properties	12,714	8,489	7,796	8,169	6,909
Other fixed assets	1,627	1,640	1,555	1,715	1,772
Fixed assets	77,915	72,512	70,925	71,563	68,940
Net current assets/(liabilities)	679	(5,207)	1,528	549	(1,035)
Total assets less current liabilities	78,594	67,305	72,453	72,112	67,905
Loans (due over one year)	30,119	20,179	25,703	25,204	20,953
Social Housing Grant	25,668	26,045	26,316	26,579	26,962
Total Liabilities	55,787	46,224	52,019	51,783	47,915
Total Net Assets	22,807	21,081	20,434	20,329	19,990
Reserves	22,807	21,081	20,434	20,329	19,990

Board and Executive

BOARD MEMBERS

Kim Vernau

Chair of Board and Chair of Development Committee

Louise Wolfson

Vice-Chair of Board and Chair of Remuneration and Nomination Committee

Vivienne King

Audit and Risk Committee

Judith Page

Development Committee

Mike Reed

Chair of Audit and Risk Committee.

Ruth Buckingham

Chair of Homes and Services Committee, Remuneration and Nomination Committee

Yemi Aladerun

Development Committee

Zahida Ramzan Asghar

Co-opted member of Remuneration and Nomination Committee

Caroline Portsmouth

Co-opted member of Homes and Services Committee

Claire Bellinger

Development Committee

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Tracey Downie

Chief Executive Officer

Mark Cole

Director of Resources

Sue Hockett

Director of Development

Roger Barton

Director of Property and Estate Services

Susan Bernard

Head of HR and Corporate Services

Jess Page

Director of Housing

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