

Chairperson's Report

AGM 2020



Dear Fellow Members,

As I write we continue to live in exceptional times. The Covid 19 pandemic has caused misery and severely disrupted lives and businesses around the world. Shettleston and the Association have obviously not been spared from this. We have had to adapt our ways of working over the last six months to ensure the safety of all whilst continuing to deliver our essential services.

Covid 19 emerged at the tail end of the 2019/20 financial year covered by this report. Other challenges also arose during the course of the year. Our staff and Committee worked hard together to address all of these. We continued to successfully deliver a wide range of services to meet the needs of tenants and other service users in the community, to continue the investment programme in our existing and new housing stock and to meet compliance and funder requirements. Real progress was also made during the year to ensure that the organisation is financially sound and remains fit for purpose going forward.

1. Investment

Over £4.2 million was invested in the Association's existing housing stock in 2019/20 and covered all aspects of maintenance, including £2 million on planned capital projects:

- 206 new energy efficient boilers installed;
- 85 homes had new kitchens fitted;
- 42 homes had new bathrooms fitted;
- 32 homes were fitted with new bathrooms and an electrical upgrade;
- 703 new smoke detector systems were fitted;
- 9 flats were remodelled to improve space standards;
- 1 new controlled entry system and close doors;

We also carried out medical adaptations to 83 homes at a cost of £199,750 and grant funding of £152,867 was received to assist with this.

We substantially increased the rate of periodic electrical testing and inspections being carried out to SHA properties - pre-empting the recent Scottish Government announcement that tests will be required every five years in future.

Progress was made with our programme for new homes:

- Work was completed on the 19 homes at the former Old Carntyne Church (re-named Cunningham House) additional grant funding was secured towards the substantial additional costs incurred during construction. The development was subsequently awarded the "best UK affordable housing development (urban)" at the Inside Housing awards.
- Work progressed on-site at Fenella Street (46 new homes, including 8 for Mid-Market rent). 12 of these homes were handed over during the year with the remainder now expected to complete in the coming year. Progress was halted when the contractor went into administration but, prior to lockdown, a new contractor was appointed to take forward the works.

- We obtained approval of grant funding to start the 44 unit new build development at St Marks Street.
- We reviewed several other development opportunities and continue to be open minded to suitable financially sound developments.

Following on from last year's introduction of our new approach to risk assessment and financial appraisal of future development projects we commissioned an internal audit review of our development operations. The new approach was commended and it will continue to be the basis upon which we consider future projects.

We bought back another four homes from sharing owners.

As previously reported, options for the future use of Tollcross Mansionhouse have been explored without success. We have continued to maintain and secure the building but after 27 years as its custodian it is now up for sale. During the year we agreed a new Conservation Agreement with the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) which will place legal obligations of care and responsibility upon any future owner of this iconic building.

2. Housing and Property Maintenance Services

We continued to deliver our landlord services to a high standard, and our performance compared well with other similar landlords across Scotland. For example:

- Our average re-let time met the target of 18 days during 2019/20.
- The proportion of lets to homeless applicants also met the agreed target.
- Rent arrears remained below the agreed threshold of 4.0% during most of the year but the impact of Covid19 had already begun to take effect by 31.3.20 resulting in us being slightly over target at 4.14%.
- New, improved repair response targets were introduced and were met or bettered. Emergency repairs were responded to on average within 2.5 hours (target under 4 hours) and non-emergency repairs took around 4.5 days to complete on average.

We continued to deliver our welfare rights service and regularly reviewed the impact of Universal Credit and the progress of our Welfare Reform Strategy. Our Retirement Housing Service was further developed and extended to the tenants of the new homes at Cunningham House. We also introduced a new tenancy sustainment service on a trial basis.

We commissioned independent satisfaction surveys of our tenants and our factored owners and both indicated high levels of satisfaction. We agreed actions to address areas identified for improvement.

New policies and procedures were adopted for: Void Management and Lettable Standard: Transfer, Assignment and Subletting of tenancies; Anti-social behaviour.

3. Wider Role

Wider role activity and achievements during the year included:

- Shettleston Community Growing Project (SCGP): Funding was secured for a part time Children and Families Worker and all services were successfully delivered: food growing, volunteering, children's activities and partnership working with schools. All funding was secured for the 2020 season. In partnership with SCGP we held a successful Family Fun Day in August 2019.

- Men's Shed: funding in place for another year and the number of members continued to grow throughout the year.
- Fuse: we continued to support Fuse as a valuable resource for our tenants' children.
- Energy Advice: energy advice and assistance delivered to tenants and involvement in Association's void work to identify metering, supply and debt issues.

In collaboration with Tollcross Trust and Housing Association we secured funding for the establishment of a new, shared, Money Advice Project.

We started discussions with our neighbours - Parkhead HA and Tollcross HA - about the possible establishment of a Food Pantry project. This led to the successful funding bid for a "pop-up" pantry on Shettleston Road and our emergency food parcels under lockdown and will hopefully be followed by joint projects in years to come.

Edrom Path: we continued to provide support to tenants to develop the "Keenagers" self-help group for older people.

We continued to host two staff from the GCVS Community Connectors project that provides advice and sign-posting services to elderly people in the area.

4. Governance and corporate

Our 2019 Annual Committee review process recognised there was a need to strengthen recruitment and a training plan was agreed. However, there were four Committee resignations during the year. Increasing Committee membership and skills knowledge remained a priority at the year end.

We adopted new role descriptions for Management Committee Members and for the Office Bearers and established a formal succession plan for the post of Chairperson. The Committee made a successful transition from paper report packs to an electronic system. This reduced costs and made it easier for the Committee to function during lockdown.

New Guidance from the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) required that we carry out a review of our compliance with the various legal and regulatory requirements upon all RSLs. We did this, agreed an Improvement Action Plan and published our first annual Assurance Statement in October 2019.

The requirements of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act were extended to RSLs in November 2019. New systems and procedures were established, publicised and put into operation to ensure our compliance. Two Freedom of Information requests were received and reported to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) by the end of March 2020.

Substantial work was carried out to enhance our cyber security to meet recommendations arising from internal and external security assessments.

We reviewed our approach to procurement and adopted a revised Procurement Strategy.

Following the Upkeep value for money review in 2019 an improvement action plan continued to be monitored and successfully progressed during the year.

Improvements in staff communication continued during the year. A successful Staff and Committee conference for both SHA and Upkeep was held in May 2019. New staff appraisal arrangements were introduced and rolled out during the year.

5. Finance

Following the loan covenant breach at the start of the year, positive discussions were held with our lenders, RBS, to restructure the existing £45M loan finance debt and ensure that we will have access to the capital finance we will in the years ahead.

A rigorous review was carried out of our long-term financial projections. With an improved understanding of our housing stock condition we decided that we needed to substantially increase planned investment in future years.

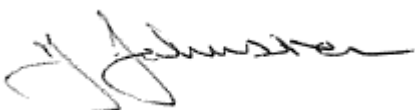
A comprehensive review of costs was undertaken. Significant progress was made in reviewing the staff structure aimed at ensuring that we can continue to deliver our plans and key services whilst maintaining rents at an affordable level. This was put on hold in March due to the Covid lockdown but will shortly resume. We have continued to review our office running costs and overheads and have made cost savings in this area.

During the year we were notified that the costs of the SHAPS defined benefit pension scheme would increase from April 2020. Following consultation with staff it was agreed that the increased cost of provision would be equally shared between the employer and the scheme members - around 30% - from May 2020/21. It was also agreed however that a more general review of pension options will be carried out this year.

A start was made with the plan to harmonise our rents - to improve transparency and demonstrable fairness in rent setting. Initial tenant consultation was carried out and differential rent rises were levied for 2020/21 - to reduce the anomalies between rents for similar properties. This is an ongoing project.

6. Looking Ahead

This is my fifth and final annual report to you as Chairperson. It has been a privilege to lead the Association. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Committee Members and staff for their contribution to the Association and their support to me - not just over the last year but throughout my time as Chair which has been a period of significant change and development for the Association. I am delighted to be continuing as a Management Committee Member and look forward to supporting my successor in the work ahead.



Gillian Johnston, Chairperson