



Briefing for the ASSH Panel of North Somerset Council
presented by Clive Bodley, Group Chief Executive Alliance Homes Group
on Friday 6th March 2015

ALLIANCE HOMES GROUP

1 Who are we?

The Alliance Homes Group is a social enterprise working in North Somerset as a community benefit organisation. It comprises three companies that operate the following brands:

- Alliance Homes
- Alliance Living Care
- Alliance Living Support
- Alliance Property Care
- Alliance Ventures

The Group provides and manages homes at sub-market rents for about 12,000 people and delivers care and support to enable 1,600 people to maintain independent living in their own homes.

Alliance Homes Group employs about 420 people and has a turnover of £35 million.

Alliance Homes achieves customer satisfaction levels at 90%. In 2014 in an independent national survey, tenants voted Alliance Homes one of the "Top Ten" landlords in the country.

2 What are we here for?

The Group's vision is to be a leading social enterprise creating innovative and sustainable solutions that improve people's quality of life. Our primary purposes are providing homes at sub-market rents and delivering care and support within the community.

The Group operates in partnership with a range of agencies in tackling poverty, social and financial exclusion. We work to bring hope into people's lives - breaking cycles of behaviour or overcoming circumstances that can prevent individuals from achieving their full potential.

3. What do we do?

With a strong focus on people, the Group supports and strengthens communities through a range of community development initiatives, housing support, and personal support and care services available across our operating areas. These are aimed at helping people to achieve or maintain independence and to overcome isolation.

Where we provide homes, our maintenance and improvement programmes are designed to reduce the cost of living of householders and maintain high standards of accommodation. There is a strong focus on energy efficiency and active asset management.

Our primary mission is to create vibrant communities where people can thrive. We want to create "hope" for a better future. In short, it is a focus on making a positive difference for the people we serve.

We summarise what we do as:

Delivering "**Stronger Communities, Better Homes, Smarter Business**"

4 How do we do it?

Our values define who we are and shape the behaviours our customers and partners can always expect from us. They support our commitment to outstanding customer service:

- Respect** – listening and responding to individual needs, treating people fairly and promoting positive teamwork
- Integrity** – being reliable, open, honest and transparent; doing what we say we will do; taking responsibility
- Transformation** – inspiring and empowering individuals and communities; applying innovative solutions
- Excellence** – aspiring to be the best in all we do; being a partner of choice; delivering outstanding quality and service

An important part of the way we work is that we choose to operate in partnership – "Alliances" – with organisations that share our ethos and values. Wherever practicable, we will share knowledge and invite others to make use of the frameworks and contracts we establish. Similarly, we recognise the expertise of others and will work in partnership where to do so will result in greater outcomes.

3 Achievements.

During 2014 we have achieved all of our corporate targets and operated within our financial plans. Alongside this we have identified and implemented Value for Money improvements with a value of £1.7m

We have secured and retained contracts to deliver care and support, doubling our scale and capacity to engage in this type of work. This has included the purchase of a domiciliary care business where we are working to remove "zero hours" contracts and operate at the "Living Wage".

The Group's performance has been receiving wider recognition and during 2014 we received the following awards:

National:

- "Top ten" Landlord
- Energy Champion Landlord
- Sustainable Housing Finance Award
- Sustainable Housing Partnership Award
- Best Diversity Initiative

Regional:

- Best New Social Housing Development
- Community Impact Award
- Best Energy Efficiency Building Scheme

Local:

- Employer of the Year
- Business in the Community Award

In January 2015 an independent review of satisfaction with our property repairs service has demonstrated some of the highest satisfaction levels recorded by the researchers.

4 Challenges

Like North Somerset Council, Alliance Homes Group operates in a challenging business environment. Reductions in public funding and changes in the welfare system all have a direct impact on our capacity to deliver effective services.

Our strategic planning and risk management identifies the following events as the highest key business risks (identified on the basis of likelihood, mitigation and impact):

- Welfare Benefit Changes
- Neighbourhood decline with high levels of social exclusion
- Regulatory compliance issues
- Loss of key contracts
- Housing stock becoming unfit for purpose

The business is organised and operates on a basis planned to be able to cope with these issues.

The social housing regulator (Homes and Communities Agency) now requires that organisations such as the Alliance Homes Group will have "stress tested" their plans to identify the point at which the organisation would be no longer viable. This stress testing indicates a relatively robust business plan. We have also identified the amount of work currently undertaken that could be stopped if necessary in order to maintain financial viability.

5 Plans

Looking forward from 2015, the Group will continue to focus on its core objectives Stronger Communities, Better Homes and Smarter Business. This will retain its “people” focus, looking to help people to achieve or maintain independence. There are important contracts outside of North Somerset expected to be let within the care and support sector and the Group is preparing to tender for some of these. Expansion of this business strand remains a key element in our plans.

We plan to expand our work towards meeting housing needs by extending our housing delivery to provide for an additional 250 new homes. Funding is already arranged for a proportion of this total.

We are working to reduce the costs of living in properties we own. To this end we have developed a “home affordability” model that will guide our future investment in homes to ensure we are minimising ongoing costs for tenants. This is primarily related to insulation and energy costs.

The Group leads a partnership called the Carbon Savings Alliance (CSA). This comprises landlords from across the country with a total housing stock of 730,000 homes. Framework contracts prepared by Alliance Homes Group are made available to CSA members. Currently, we are piloting a low energy tariff so that all void properties can be transferred onto this tariff – pegged to within 5% of the lowest tariff available. This would enable tenants to move into a home placed on a low energy tariff and to know this would be maintained without the need for frequent switching. If practicable, we will tie our own electricity generation into these supply contracts for Alliance Homes’ tenants.

We will continue to work in partnership with other like-minded organisations to deliver efficiencies and good quality in service delivery. This is evidenced currently by three consortia we lead: the Support Alliance, the Older Persons Support Alliance and the Crossroads Alliance.

The Alliance Homes Group is subject to a new regulatory framework and a new regulatory code with effect from 1st April 2015. In this context we will be proposing further changes to the constitution and governance structures.

We will continue to seek opportunities to work in partnership with North Somerset Council in meeting needs in the local community.

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