Tony Churton, Chair of the Board: I am extremely proud to have overseen the extension of our management agreement, meaning that we can continue to provide and develop the services we deliver to residents until 2019 and hopefully beyond. I am pleased to be able to maintain and develop the profile of South Essex Homes both locally and nationally through my role of Vice Chair on the Board of the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA).

I am pleased to endorse this Housing Report, both personally and on behalf of the rest of the Board.

Mike Gatrell, Chief Executive: I’m delighted to be able to invite you to review our Housing Report, which I feel serves to give a flavour for the community-based and people-focussed organisation that we are. I hope you gain an insight into our key activities and the outcomes we’ve achieved over the last couple of years.
It’s more than just a clinical ALMO for Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, it’s a living and accountable organisation.

South Essex Homes not only serves tenants of the Council by managing the tenancies of 6,200 properties, but also has outward facing contracts with some important service management agreements within the network of the Council. Most tenants are rightly proud of the long established work that South Essex Homes is responsible for, both as a landlord and as a community-spirited organisation that wins accolades for its initiatives for their tenants and one that listens to its tenants as to best practice.

The organisation is managed by a Board, made up of three councillors along with tenant and independent members, who bring expertise and reality to the daily business of a landlord with a social conscience. The Board can therefore sustain this special and successful branded organisation with an eye to the UK social housing sector and the often swift moving developments that take place, including ensuring that South Essex Homes continues to rate highly among prize winning social landlords.

The types of housing which South Essex Homes is responsible for range from tenanted general needs to sheltered or independent living for over 55 year olds. Temporary and urgent accommodation also plays an immensely important role in the responsibilities of the Council.

There is a need for South Essex Homes to constantly look to the future. Its management agreement is due for review in 2018 and I am optimistic that all councillors will have a considerable pool of good evidence to consider for the decision they will need to take.

Housing need is in one of the most precarious periods in contemporary history and this is universally recognised across the Council. The need for more social housing has never been greater; South Essex Homes plays a sturdy role in meeting many Council housing and other social objectives.

The former May (Pre-election) government produced a White Paper on Housing entitled “Fixing the broken Housing market”. This says everything but importantly the White Paper recognises that now it is about different types of housing for different people and that building to rent (for councils) is a new stream of opportunity that councils need to return to.

In whatever status you are reading this - tenant, councillor, board member or third sector, including HARP - we can all be sure that South Essex Homes Ltd is doing its best to look after all our interests in this complex and at times frustrated local housing market.
On behalf of my fellow STRF members, I welcome the publication of this Housing Report. This report serves to inform you how South Essex Homes is currently performing, highlight some key projects and celebrate its achievements to date.

I have been a tenant of Southend Borough Council and involved in the STRF for several years and in that time I’ve learnt a huge amount about housing and what makes residents tick. I am passionate about bringing communities across Southend together as I believe our voices are stronger as one.

A number of events are held each year throughout the borough which are arranged by our Southend Communities Outreach Group (SCOG). These events range in size from those laid on at a specific estate to bring neighbours out of their front doors to meet each other, through to our huge annual Southend Community Event at Priory Park which welcomed around 4000 visitors in both 2015 & 2016.

We work closely with South Essex Homes to ensure that their housing services are maintained at a high standard and we will continue to liaise with them and Southend Borough Council on your behalf in order to get the best possible deal for residents.

There are lots of ways that residents can get involved in their local community - from becoming a mystery shopper and testing out services, to volunteering at a local Hub or helping out at events. If you would like to get involved in the work of the STRF, please let us know as we are always delighted to accept new members.
Case Study

New Council Homes
Southend Borough Council has recently built the first new Council homes in 25 years, through the development of underused garage sites.
New Council Homes

Southend Borough Council has recently built the first new Council homes in 25 years, through the development of underused garage sites.

Consultation on the first phase of the garage redevelopments started in Summer 2014, where plans were proposed for the demolition of 6 garage sites in Shoebury – located in Ashanti Close, Bulwark Road and Exeter Close.

The proposed development was for 18 homes in total, including:

- 12 x 3 bed houses
- 1 x 2 bed house
- 5 x 2 bed flats including two fully adapted flats.

The Council undertook consultation exercises around the local area where people had the chance to give their comments. Plans were tweaked in line with their views, including the provision of parking being increased in the surrounding areas where it was possible.

Meanwhile, the first new council house was completed in Byron Avenue as a pilot project in January 2015.

The demolition and clearance of the garage sites started in February 2016 and the building works started shortly afterwards at Bulwark Road and Exeter Close, which were managed as a phased process.

The final building works to be completed were of a block of traditionally-built flats at Ashanti Lodge, which were passed over for South Essex Homes to manage in March 2017.

Rents are set at affordable rent levels – no higher than local housing allowance rates. South Essex Homes has successfully re-housed 18 families including six homeless families and two families where an adapted property was required due to a disability.

At a meeting of the Cabinet in March 2017, councillors agreed that plans to develop 15 homes and a bungalow for disabled use on two underutilised garage sites at Rochford Road and Audleys Close be brought forward for consultation and the submission of a planning application.

Initial studies show that the Rochford Road site has the potential for 12 two-bedroom flats and 3 three-bedroom houses, and the Audleys Close site, which is much smaller, could have a bungalow for disabled use built on it.

It is hoped that work on the sites will begin in the autumn following further public consultation.

Furthermore, additional opportunities for possible future redevelopment have been identified within the Blenheim Park & Belfairs, Shoeburyness and Southchurch wards. However the timing of any future projects will be subject to funding availability in future years and details will be brought back to the Council’s Cabinet for agreement accordingly.
The Investors in People (IIP) Gold standard was awarded to us following an intensive three day assessment at the start of February, which involved an assessor holding both one-to-one and group meetings with a wide selection of staff members from across the organisation.

The award reflects how South Essex Homes looks after its staff members and the assessor looked at the company against a set of criteria in areas such as consultation and engagement, innovation, social responsibility, openness and transparency, inspirational leadership and making the most of individuals.

Over the last year at South Essex Homes, dramatic transformations have been seen across the organisation including improved learning and development opportunities at all levels, better internal communication and a brand new approach to rewarding and recognising staff.

Mike Gatrell, Chief Executive, said: “This is a huge accomplishment that we are so proud to share. It would have not have been possible without the commitment and drive of every staff member to improve our organisation and share their own experiences. Employee engagement has always been really important to us and this is the icing on the cake that proves we have invested in our staff and continue to do so.”

South Essex Homes was first assessed by Investors in People at the start of 2016, when it was awarded the Core standard. The Board of Management then set staff the challenge of ‘Going for Gold’ and all teams have been involved on the journey to obtain this prestigious standard.

Having gone from Core to the Gold standard in just 12 months, South Essex Homes has attained one of the quickest ever achievements of this highest IIP standard of any company in the housing sector.

Tony Churton, Chair of the Board, said: “I have been most impressed, although not surprised, with the way teams have worked together in pursuit of this Gold status. The benefits of the underlying behaviours that have led to this award will be felt and noticed by all our residents, staff and stakeholders.”

In February 2017, South Essex Homes achieved the prestigious status of becoming an Investors in People Gold standard company.
Looking ahead...

We are constantly evaluating our Reward & Recognition strategy in order to ensure that we are effective in acknowledging good achievement and motivating our staff.

Our IIP Gold status is subject to annual reviews so we will not be resting on our laurels! Instead we will aim to show the assessor how much further we have come when they pay us another visit in early 2018.
Case Study

Today, Southend Careline monitors over 4000 community alarm units for clients living within and outside of the borough plus over 600 telecare sensors.

The standard service offered involves a static alarm unit linked to a pendant worn by the client whilst in and around their home. Additional support is available in the form of telecare sensors - discreet wireless sensors continuously monitoring real time emergencies and lifestyle changes, which enable clients to manage the risks associated with independent living.

There are a wide variety of sensors available to cater for the individual needs of each client. Environmental sensors can be set up around the home to monitor smoke, heat and floods. Sensors are also available to monitor frail clients who have a tendency to fall or wander, or who would be particularly vulnerable to unwanted callers.

- On average Southend Careline responds to around 142,000 calls per year
- The team of dedicated Careline officers comprises of 7 full time staff and 10 part time staff who work around the clock.
- It is fully accredited with the Telecare Services Association and regularly exceeds the Code of Practice target of answering 97.5% of calls within 60 seconds.

Southend Careline has welcomed a surge of new clients since the start of 2017 since companies offering similar services elsewhere in Essex have closed down.

However, Southend Careline is continuing to strengthen and thrive as it grows both in the range of services it offers and the number of clients it serves.

Peggy Malone, 93, has been a Southend Careline client since she moved into her Nicholson House flat when it was newly built in 1991. She said: “I feel so reassured knowing that someone is calling me every day to check how I am – and that help is at hand should I ever need it in an emergency.”

Southend Careline

Southend Careline provides a confidential alarm service that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year – offering reassurance to its clients and their families that help is just the touch of a button away.
Barry Smith is a new dispersed community alarm client at his home in Sherwood Way. He said: “I really want to compliment your Careline team on the excellent service they have provided in getting the service set-up and installed in my flat. Everything was explained in clear and simple terms and everyone I dealt with was very polite, helpful and friendly which I found very reassuring. I can’t praise the Careline team highly enough, they are a credit to South Essex Homes.”
Stats for 2015/16

Services

18,473 repairs were attended to (that is an average of around 73 jobs per working day)

98.5% of all repair jobs were completed within the target time

Residents

69,539 calls were received by our Customer Contact Centre

82.9% of calls were answered within target times

95 complaints were received and responded to

Financial

£32,749,394 collected in rent on behalf of Southend Borough Council
99.5% of residents were satisfied with their repair

100% of all eligible properties received a gas safety check

Void (empty) properties were made ready for new tenants in an average of 18.7 days, against a target of 18 days.

91.6% of complaints (87) were resolved at Stage 1 without the need for escalation

86% of leaseholders were satisfied with the service they received

95.1% of tenants were satisfied with the service they received

92% of people were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live

£58,854 collected for arrears outstanding from former tenants
Timeline of Events

**April 2015**
- SEH signs Mindful employer charter.

**June 2015**
- Stars customer telephone survey starts – over 1000 residents contacted for their feedback.
- The first ‘Digital Housing Hub’ in The Victoria shopping centre, Southend, opens its doors to the public.

**August 2015**
- SBC agree to extend SEH’s Management Agreement for a further 3 years from April 2016.
- Several Tenancy Services Officers receive Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) certificates from Essex Police – bringing the total number of accredited staff up to 12.
- Nicholson House, Southend’s newest and biggest sheltered housing scheme, celebrates its 25th anniversary.

**Nov 2015**
- SEH is 10 years old!
  - ‘The Big Conversation’ residents conference is held at The Tickfield Centre.
  - SEH supports Housing Day by asking residents what makes them proud to be a tenant.
  - Campbell Tickell complete a quality assurance review of Leaseholder Services.

**April 2016**
- Southend Careline’s Lisa and Kevin appear in ‘The Bikini Challenge’ on ITV1’s Lorraine programme.
- Affordable housing at empty flats within town centre tower blocks is offered to teachers moving into the Southend area to take up new jobs.

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**May 2015**
- Launch of new ‘output based’ caretaking and cleaning service.
- Income Management service received quality assurance audit by Campbell Tickell.
- Southend Energy launched.
- The first Southend Borough Council resident claims Universal Credit.
- First council house built in the borough for over 20 years was completed by SBC and passed to SEH to sign up new tenant and manage.

**July 2015**
- New STRF office opened in Chiltern tower block.
- ‘Council House Crackdown’ airs on BBC1, featuring staff from the SEH Tenancy team & SBC Housing Fraud.
- TSA award presented to Careline staff by Mike Gatrell.
- SEH signs ‘Zero Tolerance to Loan Sharks’ agreement.
- Income Management Service rated as good and overall performance in the upper quartile.

**Oct 2015**
- Resident Awards Conference held at the Cliffs Pavilion, celebrating a year where £70,000 of external funding was successfully bid for by residents.
- A series of computer workshops at The Hub are offered to residents to mark Get Online Week.
- A week of voluntary activity with support from SEH sees the Mendip Wildlife Garden completely transformed.

**Feb 2016**
- St Lukes Community Hub redecorated with help from Dulux’s ‘Refresh’ scheme.
- SEH achieves core IIP standard.
- Multi-lingual drop in sessions are launched at The Hub to support those who don’t speak English as their first language.

**May 2016**
- New Hub in West Road, Shoebury, opens its doors.
- ‘Portrayal’ exhibition launched at The Forum in Southend.
- Southend Multi-Agency ASB Response Team (SMAART) moves into its new home at the newly renovated Southend Police Station.
June 2016
Housing Quality Network (HQN) renew our Income Management Accreditation.
New Hub opens in the Blenheim Children’s Centre in Leigh.

August 2016
Our quest for IIP Gold is launched to staff.
Our Leaseholder Satisfaction survey show that 82% of leaseholders are satisfied with the service they receive (217 responses received).

October 2016
Our staff survey hits a return rate of 81% - our highest ever return – giving us a realistic view of our employees’ thoughts and feelings.
Leaseholder & Right to Buy section of our website is completely re-styled.
Three of our residents appear in the NFA’s ‘Ordinary People; Extraordinary Lives’ photography exhibition at the Palace of Westminster.

December 2016
Our annual Children’s Xmas party at Kids Kingdom is the best ever, with 89 children attending from estates we manage across the borough.
Our team’s fundraising efforts for the Motor Neurone Disease Association throughout the year hits a total of £1600!
New Reward & Recognition Strategy for staff is launched.

February 2017
SEH achieves IIP Gold!
New provider for women’s refuge service named as Dove SOS – changing the refuge from a fixed location to a floating service.
New Hub opens in Centre Place Family Centre in a joint venture with Estuary Housing Association.
First resident parking permit schemes are put in place in East Street and Quantock to prevent shoppers and commuters misusing resident parking spaces in these two areas.

April 2017
New Business Committee launched.

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New Hub opens in the Blenheim Children’s Centre in Leigh.
Multi-Use Sports Arena (MUSA) opened on the Queensway estate, funded by the Better Queensway project.

September 2016
SEH named as top performing ALMO in the Inside Housing Innovation Index & 6th highest of any housing organisation in the UK.

November 2016
Shoebury garage site redevelopment: The first of 18 new houses and flats in Eagle Way, Bulwark Road and Ashanti Close are handed over to SEH to sign up new tenants from the housing register and homeless applicants.
Six Officers from our Community Development & Specialist Income Management Teams become C.A.B. Advisers.

January 2017
Hugely successful Resident Awards Conference is held at new venue of the Park View Suite in Chalkwell.
New marketing campaign launched for the Southend Careline service.
New CCTV cameras installed at the 3 tower blocks in the Balmoral estate, Westcliff.
Southend Careline once again receives TSA accreditation.

March 2017
Review of our ICT systems begins.
Vision 2022 Business Plan launched.

July 2017
South Essex Homes named in the national list of the Top 50 landlords in 24housing magazine.
Case Study

The Hub

First opened in June 2015, The Hub is a community space where residents can obtain help with a wide range of issues – from getting online to accessing support to finding a job.

The original and largest base for The Hub is within The Victoria shopping centre in Southend town centre. Since its launch, The Hub has branched out and now operates out of three further locations across the borough – in West Road, Shoebury; Blenheim Children’s Centre, Leigh; and the Centre Place Family Centre in the Woodgrange estate.

At each of the sites, visitors are able to access:

- Help using computers – including the offer for residents to bring their own tech, mobiles, tablets, laptops and learn how to get the most out of them
- Family Mosaic – offering a support service for people with ongoing complex issues
- South Essex Homes Tenancy Support – Mutual exchanges, help with housing and benefit applications and other tenancy-related matters
- Help with Universal Job Match, job searches and CV writing
- As well as some additional services according to local demand

The Hub relies on the help of volunteers, but the breadth of experience to be gained from giving time to work at The Hub can prove extremely useful when it comes to gaining paid employment in the future, as Dave Hindley discovered.

Dave explained: “I was on Job Seeker’s Allowance for a while – I knew I wanted to do public sector or government work but just couldn’t see how it was going to be possible.”

To date, over 6,000 local people have accessed help and advice through The Hub
“I came across the opportunity to volunteer at The Hub in Southend so thought I’d give it a go. When I started I really didn’t know what to expect and at first I was a bit worried, as I jumped in at the deep end really. However pretty soon my confidence grew, as did my communication skills, and I found myself being able to offer help to lots of people and really enjoying myself.

“Later, I applied for a job which involves working with vulnerable adults. During the job interview, thanks to my voluntary experience at The Hub, I was able to give lots of examples of where I’d helped people and could answer their questions confidently.

“I know for sure that without that work experience, I would have struggled to answer their questions and may not have even been offered the interview in the first place without it on my C.V. That experience proved incredibly helpful as I got the job!”

Dave explained: “I was on Job Seeker’s Allowance for a while – I knew I wanted to do public sector or government work but just couldn’t see how it was going to be possible.”
Resident Scrutiny Forum

The Resident Scrutiny Forum (RSF) formed in December 2012 and is made up of six residents from across the borough. All prospective members of the RSF are interviewed to ensure that the candidates have the right kind of skills to scrutinise South Essex Homes’ performance and services.

On an ongoing basis, the RSF is looking at how happy residents are with their housing service overall and whether South Essex Homes is meeting its targets.

They achieve this by conducting reviews of into specific areas of the services provided by South Essex Homes. They may choose a variety of methods to conduct their reviews including; interviewing or shadowing staff members, obtaining tenants’ opinions, examining statistics and attending meetings as observers.

These reports and recommendations have resulted in actions and improvements to South Essex Homes’ processes, such as:

- Following the review of the Caretaking team, the RSF noted that estate inspections were poorly attended by residents and that reports from inspections were not easily available for tenants to read. Following their recommendations, the dates, times and meeting points for all upcoming estate inspections are promoted in Insight magazine. The subsequent reports from estate inspections are now made available on the South Essex Homes website in an easy-to-navigate A-Z list of addresses so any resident can refer to the latest inspection of their street.

- After reviewing the Customer Contact Centre, the RSF noted that staff were especially busy at certain times of the week, meaning that residents who were calling during those periods were experiencing long delays getting through. They also realised that our records regarding our residents’ preferred contact methods were not always kept up to date. Following their recommendation, an article was included in Insight magazine publicising the busy times for residents to avoid. The article also encouraged residents to inform us of their latest contact details and anything else we need to be aware of with regards to communicating with them - for example if they have mobility problems so we know to expect them to take a little longer to answer the door if we need to visit them at any point.
Diane Nicholls, a Westcliff resident who sits on the RSF, said: “Since I have been involved in the RSF I have found this a very fulfilling role. By talking to residents and staff, we have gained a greater understanding of how the different services and departments work. Part of our job is to make sure that SEH keep trying to be as cost effective as they can while still providing a good quality of services and care and also to ensure that residents are kept informed along the way.”
Over ten years
of working together and making a difference in Southend

We have enjoyed numerous successes since our launch in October 2005 and we are taking this opportunity to celebrate some of our key achievements so far.

- We have put residents at the heart of everything we do and as such we have seen resident satisfaction rise dramatically from 75% when we started recording this statistic in 2008-09 to 95.6% in 2016-17.
- Since our launch, we have invested over £100 million to improve and continually maintain Southend Borough Council’s homes.
- In that time, we have:
  - Fitted 5,653 new Bathrooms
  - Fitted 5,360 new Kitchens
  - Installed 4,007 Gas Boilers
  - Installed new Windows at 1,641 properties
  - Replaced 1,016 Roofs
  - Carried out 483 Electrical Rewires
- By March 2017, 100% of all eligible homes had been made ‘decent’.
- In 2009, South Essex Homes was awarded two stars by the Audit Commission – a monumental achievement at the time which opened up new avenues of funding for improvements to the Council’s homes.
- We achieved the prestigious status of becoming an Investors in People Gold rated company in February 2017.
• We have taken over the management of the Council’s domestic abuse refuge, which became a new ‘floating’ service in 2017.
• We have won or been shortlisted for numerous accolades – from national housing awards through to local community awards.
• We have successfully moved to an ‘output-based’ cleaning and caretaking service, where estate services are allocated according to need.
• We have played a central role in the launch of The Hubs across the borough to support our residents in a variety of ways.
• We have launched a Resident Scrutiny Forum to turn the spotlight on our own services and look for ways to work smarter.
• We are champions for diversity and are on the charter of ‘mindful employers’. We have also been named in Stonewall’s list of the Top 100 employers.
• We have been awarded professional accreditations for our Careline and Income Management services.
• After two office moves, our main offices have been situated within the Civic Centre since 2014 – a more convenient base for our customers and more cost effective for us.
Our Mission Statement

Working smarter together in partnership with Southend Borough Council, we will:

- **Provide** excellent services
- **Ensure** our sustainability

southessexhomes
working smarter together
South Essex Homes has set out its plans for the coming years through a Business Plan entitled ‘Vision 2022’.

Rather than devising a long list of actions for staff to work through, our Board have chosen five key projects that are to remain the focus for all South Essex Homes employees during the first stage of delivering Vision 2022.

By concentrating on five targets, better known as our ‘High 5’, staff are able to focus their efforts reaching for goals that are both tangible and achievable.

- **Delivery of Repairs service**
  Redesigning the delivery of the repairs and maintenance service

- **The Careline Challenge**
  Transforming the Careline service into a commercially viable business unit and making it more competitive

- **Re-designing how we work**
  Reducing costs of frontline services, whilst maintaining performance levels

- **Expanding the future role of South Essex Homes**
  Utilising the commercial subsidiary South Essex Property Services (SEPS) to increase our competitiveness, expand our portfolio and reduce costs

- **Reviewing ICT**
  Delivering effective IT solutions to facilitate culture change and make the delivery of services more efficient
Thank you for reading this Housing Report – we hope you have found it interesting and informative.

Should you wish to pass on your feedback about this document, or contact us for any other reason, we would be delighted to hear from you.

You can...

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