



Business Plan 2017 to 2022

Vision 2022

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South Essex Homes Business Plan

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 South Essex Homes is the management company established in October 2005 by Southend Borough Council (The Council) to manage the 6,500 homes of the Council's rented and leasehold properties. We have made significant progress in improving services, working with residents and investing in homes over the last 11 years.
- 1.2 This business plan is about the future. It covers the period from 2017 to 2022 and is above all intended to be a practical document providing the operating framework for South Essex Homes over the next five years. The objectives we have set are ambitious while recognising the constraints and challenges that continued pressure on public finances create.
- 1.3 The plan emphasises the importance of our continued relationship with the Council and that, for us to continue to add value, the partnership needs to be underpinned by clear expectations and shared ambitions. We understand and accept the need for a continued re-evaluation of our on-going role and articulate through this plan how we see our contribution developing.
- 1.4 South Essex Homes and the Council have a strong track record of achievement in the Housing Service. We believe this provides a sound platform for the future development of the services we provide but also recognises the need for us to invest in our staff, our systems, our residents and our key relationships for us to continue to make a difference in the future.
- 1.5 We also realise that we must expand our sphere of work and increase income to ensure the long term sustainability of South Essex Homes. We aim to achieve this through our subsidiary South Essex Property Services.
- 1.5 The essence of this plan is about practicality and delivery. We have set out clear ambitions and identified outcome measures that will enable us to demonstrate results to both the Council and residents. The ambitions set out here will form the basis of action plans which describe the detail of how South Essex Homes will continue to deliver a high quality service for the Council by working smarter together.

Tony Churton
Chair of the Board, March 2017

2.0 Our Mission

2.1 South Essex Homes Mission is *Working Smarter Together*

3.0 Our Aims

3.1 Our aims reflect the fundamental goals we must achieve in close collaboration with the Council. These are set out below:

Working Smarter Together
In **partnership** with Southend Borough Council

We will:

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

4.0 The Influencing Factors

4.1 South Essex Homes' aims are driven by a series of influencing factors, from national economic pressures to the Council's own strategic objectives. Our goals are inextricably linked with these factors. Our overriding purpose is to work holistically with the Council in ensuring tenants receive a high quality, cost effective service and that our future is sustainable.

4.2 The National Context

We face a time of very significant change for housing and the public sector more widely. This business plan is being prepared in the context of that continuing change and uncertainty. In addition it is likely that public sector spending constraints will remain a priority for the Government, putting further financial pressures on both the Company and the Council.

The key national factors likely to continue to impact on South Essex Homes directly and indirectly are:

- The Government continuing to reduce public expenditure
- The challenges to increase affordable housing in the wider context of a general shortage of housing and the increase in private rented housing for families
- The challenge of meeting the future demands of welfare reform
- The ageing population and the social care challenges arising from this

In addition the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA) and the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) have stated that the Councils and ALMOs they represent are keen to help deliver new homes across every tenure, and believe that, given the right help, they could make a major contribution. Specifically they have asked the Government to:

Encourage and support Councils to supply homes for sale, market rent and low rent housing depending on the needs of, and market issues in, local areas.

Reconsider social rent reduction plans and debt caps to enable Councils to finance much more new building from their HRAs.

Make sure that arrangements to replace Council higher - value homes give Councils the resources and flexibility to deliver at least one-for-one replacement.

4.3 The Local Context

The challenges facing Southend are reflective of the national context and South Essex Homes has a key role in supporting the Council to respond to these.

4.4 The Local Housing Context

The Council's local Housing Strategy contains three aims which reflect the national agenda and are particularly relevant in terms of South Essex Homes' role. These are:

- Promote the delivery of quality housing, including affordable, to meet local needs and promote a sustainable and balanced housing market
- Promote improvement in the quality of the existing housing stock achieving Decent, Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable homes across all tenures
- Promoting greater accessibility to different types of housing and promoting independent living for vulnerable groups and continuing work to prevent homelessness

The Company's objectives reflect these aims.

4.5 The Broader Local Context

The Objectives identified in the Council's business plan are intended to contribute to helping the Council achieve its strategic priorities.

The five key strategic aims of the Council remain:

- **Safe**
 - *Create a safe environment across the town for residents, workers and visitors*
 - *Working in partnership with Essex Police and other partners to tackle crime*
 - *Look after and safeguard children and vulnerable adults*
- **Clean**
 - *Continue to promote the use of green technology and initiatives to benefit the local economy and environment*
 - *Encourage and enforce high standards of environmental stewardship*
- **Healthy**
 - *Actively promote healthy lifestyles for all*
 - *Work with public and private sectors to provide good quality housing*
 - *Enable the planning and development of quality, affordable housing*
- **Prosperous**
 - *Improve the life chances of our residents, especially vulnerable children and adults, by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities*
 - *Ensure continued regeneration of the town through a culture lead agenda*
 - *Ensure residents have access to high quality education to enable them to be lifelong learners and have fulfilling employment*
 - *Ensure the town is 'open for business' and that new, developing and existing enterprise is nurtured and supported*
- **Led by an Excellent Council**
 - *Work with and listen to our communities and partners to achieve better outcomes for all*
 - *Enable communities to be self-sufficient and foster pride in the town*
 - *Promote and lead an entrepreneurial, creative and innovative approach to the development of our town*

The key focus for the Council will be:

- *Responding effectively to and supporting the move towards the integration of the health and social care agenda*
- *Responding to the pressures on the children's services*
- *Delivering the services across the borough holistically and within integrated communities with the public taking more responsibility*

Achieving this through the transformational agenda of:

- *Having a more entrepreneurial approach, including income generation*
- *Being more of an enabler rather than a provider working with communities and partners to deliver services*

These offer us both business opportunities to support the Council and major challenges to the way we deliver our services to support these objectives.

The Council is under pressure to meet local housing needs as a result of rising house prices and also the level of rents in the private rented sector. Ensuring the delivery of additional housing across tenures in the Borough is a key priority for the Council. The Council is seeking to pursue a number of initiatives over the coming years in order to deliver this.

South Essex Homes can support the Council to deliver these broader objectives by widening the scope of its own service delivery to the Council.

5.0 Our Objectives

5.1 Taking into account the national context, the local pressures and our aims, we have identified the key strategic objectives to be achieved over the next 5 years.

These objectives are:

- Deliver Value to the Council
- Empower Residents
- Provide Innovative Solutions
- Engage with Communities
- Develop our commercial activities

6.0 Delivering our Objectives

6.1 Delivering Value to the Council

We will:

Work in partnership with the Council to critically review our purpose and contribution:

- Continue to deliver an efficient sustainable service
- Seek to assist in the delivery of the major town centre regeneration project
- Work with the Council to support and deliver the requirements of any Local Housing Company
- Continue to respond effectively to the requirements arising from the introduction of Welfare Reform
- Maximise the Council's rental income

6.2 Empowering Residents

We will:

- Review and develop our Engagement Strategy to continue to offer the broadest range of options for residents to inform the on-going delivery of services
- Continue to work in partnership with the Residents' Scrutiny Forum to deliver actions identified from their independent reviews
- Support and train residents to encourage representatives, forums and associations to become more self-sufficient in their community involvement
- Develop the Hub concept to further support residents to deal with issues they are experiencing, which may be compromising their tenancy, maximise their income and reduce arrears for the organisation
- Support all residents to ensure sustainability of tenancies and leases

6.3 Providing Innovative Solutions

We will:

- Strive to maintain our key performance and resident satisfaction measures in the top quartile of our peers, in the context of reducing costs
- Further develop the Asset Management Strategy and Reinvestment Standard to enable informed decisions to be made about future investment in the stock

- Review the form of delivery of the repairs service to ensure Value for Money and to ensure compliance with relevant legislation
- Comprehensively review our IT and other communication systems to ensure staff are equipped to deliver excellent services, to improve communication and to ensure residents are able to access our services using a variety of online methods to suit their needs
- Review the delivery of front line services to ensure the highest quality of service in the context of our overall financial viability
- Work in partnership with the Council and other providers to contribute to building community capacity by sourcing external funding for projects

6.4 Engaging with Communities

We will:

- Identify initiatives to enhance the communities where residents live and increase satisfaction with neighbourhoods, educating and supporting tenants to take more responsibility for this
- Support the Council in achieving its objectives, including regeneration, renewal and redevelopment projects
- Work in partnership with the Council and external agencies to provide advice and support to residents to minimise the impact of Welfare Reforms
- Educate, support and encourage residents to improve their management of the use of energy and cut associated energy bills

6.5 Developing our Commercial Activities

We will:

- Maximise external sources of funding
- Review and expand the delivery of the Careline Service to maximise income
- Focus on maximising the use of our commercial subsidiary, South Essex Property Services, to provide more cost effective services and to improve our competitiveness
- Expand the services delivered to the Council to support the General Fund

7.0 Strategic Projects and Performance Goals

7.1 We have identified five key projects to drive the plan forward. The aim of these is to put the Company in a good position going forward to meet the changes and challenges awaiting us. We will work with staff to build on these to achieve the aims going forward. The five projects are:

- **Careline Review**

Transforming the Careline service into a commercially viable business unit and making it more competitive

- **Repairs and Maintenance**

Redesigning the delivery of the externalised repairs service

- **Re-engineering of Frontline services**

Reducing costs of services, whilst maintaining performance levels

- **ICT Review**

Delivering effective IT solutions to facilitate culture change and delivery models

- **Expanding the future role of South Essex Homes**

Utilising the commercial subsidiary to increase our competitiveness, expand our portfolio and reduce costs

7.2 Alongside this we will continue to strive to maintain the excellent service delivery to our tenants. We have a set of key performance indicators, which are set out in Appendix A.

8.0 Supporting our Objectives

8.1 To enable us to achieve our objectives we need to have the right business and cultural foundations in place and be able to maintain and constantly build upon these.

8.2 South Essex Homes has a strong track record in, and has consistently demonstrated our ability to, deliver results. We are confident we have in place the governance, leadership and key relationships to continue delivering and achieve the ambitions set out in this plan. Most of all we have confident, capable staff who demonstrate a positive attitude to the challenges ahead. Underpinning our plan are the key organisational foundations on which to deliver our aims and objectives.

9.0 Organisational Development

9.1 We have achieved Investors in People Gold Award accreditation and will use the lessons learned from this together with the results from our three yearly staff survey to develop our staff and leaders through our Organisational Development Programme.

10.0 Performance Management

10.1 The Company's performance management strategy combined with the planning process enables the targets set in partnership with the Council to be robustly monitored and delivered. This combined with effective leadership and Governance provides the foundation for ensuring the ambitions in this plan are delivered.

11.0 Risk Management

11.1 The effective management of Risk will be a key factor in the delivery of our business plan. To support the identification and management of risks we have in place a comprehensive strategy that supports a structured and focussed approach to risk management. The strategy aims to apply best practice to the identification, evaluation and control of key risks and ensure that residual risks are at an acceptable level.

12.0 Behaviours

12.1 Having the right behavioural environment for our staff to work in ensures that we work collaboratively towards our goals, both with each other, our customers and our stakeholders. Staff have worked together across the organisation on developing our corporate behaviours and are proud to say they own the behaviours. These are set out below:

- **Communicating Effectively**

Giving information or instructions in a clear and concise manner that understands and appreciates the needs of the receiver.

- **Being Consistent**

Ensuring a consistent approach is taken when we make decisions or give advice, to tenants or staff, making certain there is equity.

- **Being Respectful and Professional**

Treating everyone as they would wish to be treated, so they feel their needs are valued. Acting with integrity and a high professional standard and being sympathetic to customers' needs.

- **Having Ownership with Empowerment**

Taking responsibility for work from start to finish. Management giving staff at all levels the freedom to make decisions, where appropriate and able to do so, and supporting them throughout.

- **Having a Positive Can Do Attitude**

Looking for solutions rather than excuses. No blame, no surprises.

- **Being Collaborative**

Sharing consistent goals and being supportive of each other in achieving them and ensuring that others views are valued and respected.

13.0 Financial Resources

13.1 In moving forward the Company has to strike a balance between reducing costs and maintaining services. In setting the savings targets for the next five years, it is believed that this can still be achieved. It will however be difficult to achieve further savings without adversely affecting services. The Company is likely to need to look to use sustainable income from South Essex Property Services to support the management fee to ensure service levels are sustained. A summary of the financial position is set out in Appendix B.

14.0 Appendices

14.1 Appendix A - Performance Targets

14.2 Appendix B - Five Year Company Budget