



## Hightown Housing Association Limited

### Social Impact Report 2017/2018

#### Activities

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Hightown has continued to be a registered provider of social housing and provider of care and supported housing services.

It has been a record year for the Association, developing over 640 new homes, including 107 homes for shared ownership, and 9 commercial shop units.

At 31 March 2018 we now own and manage over 6,000 properties and provide over 30,000 hours of care and support each week to 834 service users.

In the year to 31 March 2018 we borrowed a further £31.5 million from Retail Charity Bonds plc being the proceeds of a further bond issuance. Unfortunately, it is not possible to trace the proceeds of the Retail Charity Bond funding through to individual development schemes or units due to the number of schemes delivered and in progress, each at different stages of development when the funds are used. However, all these units delivered and works in progress were for our charitable purposes, providing much needed accommodation for people in need of affordable housing and care and support

#### Impact

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The social and environmental outcomes from Hightown's activities have had a very positive beneficial impact on a large number of residents, services users and the wider community.

It can be difficult to calculate and quantify these benefits in financial terms but they are nevertheless as important as measurable financial outcomes.

Working in partnership with local authorities to deliver a large number of new homes, Hightown is having a significant social impact, reducing the use of expensive temporary accommodation and improving the quality of life of a significant number of households.

In 2017/18, Hightown provided general needs rented accommodation to 200 homeless households, 186 of which were statutory homeless and owed a duty by the Local Authority.

Hightown rented homes to 549 general needs households at sub-market rents to people from local authority housing registers, mainly through choice based lettings schemes, 36% of these were homeless, and facilitated 61 exchanges. We provided 70 new shared ownership

homes. This has transformed the lives and well-being of over 1,680 occupiers. There were also 61 general needs and 2 supported housing mutual exchanges during the year.

Also in 2017/18 Hightown invested over £630k in energy efficiency measures, such as air source heat pump installations to replace electric systems, boiler and cylinder replacements and window replacements to reduce heat loss and energy used, improve the warmth of people's homes and to provide savings in utility costs to residents.

Tenants living in affordable housing can also use the provision of a stable high quality home to improve their financial circumstances. In general needs rented housing, the lower cost rents can enable tenants to save to move into private sector housing. In 2017/18, 55 general needs tenants who gave notice on their tenancies moved into the private rented sector.

In April 2017, Hightown introduced a Financial Inclusion service for general needs tenants experiencing financial difficulties. The Financial Inclusion Officer supports tenants to maximise their incomes, by supporting them to identify benefit entitlement, apply for benefits and challenge benefit decisions. The Financial Inclusion Officer secured backdated and ongoing Housing Benefit awards and Discretionary Housing Payments totalling £172,409. In addition, the service achieved non-housing related benefit award payments for tenants totalling £100,436. A second Financial Inclusion Officer has been introduced for 2018/19 to expand the service and support general needs tenants impacted by ongoing welfare reforms.

In our shared ownership homes 29 residents were able to increase the share of the property they owned. This indicates that their financial circumstances had improved to enable them to do this.

Hightown's social lettings service now has 54 homes in management, which are made available to local authorities for use as temporary accommodation. The service assists our local authority partners to fulfil their statutory duties more cost effectively compared to bed

and breakfast or private sector alternatives. One family helped by the Hightown Lettings service was single mother Jodie, who is a teaching assistant and was evicted from her privately rented home following rent increases. She has since found a permanent home in Watford.

Through the delivery of our care and supported housing services we improve the quality of life for a large proportion of our 834 service users. We provide over 30,000 hours of support each week.

In our care and supported housing department, two of our learning disability services were joint winners of the Buckinghamshire County Council Dignity in Care awards. The services were recognised for a sustainable approach to promoting dignity, respect and wellbeing. The entry highlighted two particular achievements: one for a service user with Rhetts syndrome and epilepsy who has been supported to return to eating solid food for the first time in many years; and another for a service user with Downs Syndrome who has been supported to stay in his home despite a diagnosis of early-onset dementia.

A further two services were shortlisted for Housing Heroes Care and Support Team of the Year Award and the 24Diversity Award for the Best New Build Accessible Scheme.

Here are a few smaller scale illustrations of how Hightown's care and supported housing services have achieved a social return on assets during 2017/18:

- We have successfully piloted a scheme to reduce 'bed blocking' in mental health wards by moving people out of hospital into community based temporary housing and then on to more settled accommodation.
- We worked with our local authority partners to provide unaccompanied, young refugees with stable accommodation and assisted them with accessing education.
- In partnership with St Albans District Council we have introduced a street drinking intervention worker to assist people into healthier lifestyles.
- Hightown has opened a new temporary accommodation service in St Albans offering 10 rooms for individuals or couples awaiting permanent accommodation.
- One of our learning disability schemes has been so successful in promoting independence that we have been able to turn the staff office back into a flat and provide visiting support instead.

## Outcome Indicators and Results

Outputs	Indicator	Results
Build 200 homes a year to let at sub-market rents	Number of new homes completed for rent at sub-market rents	Hightown completed over 640 new homes including 523 to let at sub-market rents (442 Affordable and Social Rent and 81 Intermediate Rent), 107 new shared ownership homes and 8 supported housing lets.  We also built 9 commercial shop units as part of those developments, providing additional local employment.
Let those 200 new homes for sub-market rents to people from local authority housing registers who cannot afford to rent or buy at market rates	Number of new homes let at sub-market rents	We let 425 of our new sub-market rented homes, and re-let 124 existing properties, to people from local authority housing registers.  In total this provided housing to 1,330 people from local authority housing registers who could not afford to rent or buy at market rates.  We additionally let 63 Intermediate rent and 8 supported housing rent properties which were not required to be let to people from local authority housing registers.
Let 40 of those homes for sub-market rent to people who have are statutorily homeless	Number of lets to homeless people	We let 186 homes to people who were classed as statutorily homeless.

Build 100 new homes per year for shared ownership	Number of completed shared ownership homes in year	We completed 107 new shared ownership homes.
Part sell/part rent 100 new shared ownership homes a year to people who cannot afford to buy outright.	Number of new shared ownership homes built	We sold 70 new shared ownership homes in the year and 29 existing shared owners bought a higher proportion of their home (staircased) including 23 who purchased the whole of the remaining equity. At 31 March 2018 year end we held 46 completed shared ownership units for sale.

## Future Impact

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The financial year to 31 March 2018 was another very successful year for Hightown. All surpluses in the year were invested into funding our development programme to build new homes, defraying new borrowing.

Our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) remain strong. Our value for money measurement of general needs performance through the HouseMark benchmarking continues to show Hightown as a strong performer with upper quartile performance in the most important areas. We continue to have the lowest general needs properties management cost per unit in our peer group.

We delivered 640 new units of Affordable Housing of which 107 were new shared ownership units.

The continued fall in rents imposed by a -1% rent reduction in social rents introduced by the Government in July 2015 has been managed and due to the growth in our new unit numbers, we are able to withstand this income reduction to April 2020 without a detrimental impact on services or standards. We continue to believe that we will be able to manage the reductions to 2020 through increased efficiency in managing the pressure for growth from new units within the additional income created. The Government has advised that from April 2020 rent increases will revert to a maximum of CPI+1% which should provide valuable additional funding to deliver more homes for people in housing need.

We have over 1,000 units in the development pipeline with a strategic objective to deliver around 400-450 new homes for each of the next 5 years.