

We enable people to live well
in their home & community.



Communities' strategy 2022-2025



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Introduction

This strategy sets out our vision and plans to help our customers live better in their communities, by addressing the following priority issues:

- Social & economic: building economic resilience of customers post pandemic and through the cost-of-living crisis, addressing social inequalities and antisocial behaviour in our communities
- Environment: improving conditions in our neighbourhoods, with a clear focus on cleaning, grounds maintenance of communal areas in and around our homes, plus environmental improvements that will have a positive benefit for customers

Above all, our aim is to work with customers to identify their priorities in relation to the above, and work with them and partners to deliver positive results that customers will notice.

The Communities Strategy replaces the Social and Community Impact Strategy and links with the Customer, Asset Management and Development Strategies and Sustainability Framework, to deliver our priority of making a difference in the communities we serve.

Mission and priorities

Our mission is to ensure that “People live well in their homes and communities.”

The priorities, which underpin this mission, are:

- Providing safe and good quality homes and services.
- Making a difference in the communities we serve.
- Providing more affordable homes.
- Supporting colleagues to enjoy work, learn and grow.

This strategy supports our priority of making a difference in the communities we serve, and has two main aims:

- To build economic resilience and address social inequalities, working with partners across GM.
- To make our communities places that customers and IVH are proud of.

National context

Social and economic

Some of the biggest challenges facing communities are social and economic inequalities, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis

The Government’s Levelling Up and Regeneration White Paper and Bill are predicated on the fact that areas of the UK have been ‘left behind’ and that action is needed to address inequalities in terms of health and life expectancy, child literacy, standards of living and equality of opportunity in these communities. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is geared towards shifting power away from Whitehall and towards local decision makers, to regenerate their communities.

In July 2022, The Resolution Foundation released an interim report by The Economy Enquiry 2030 entitled “Stagnation Nation”, about the impact of a decade of economic stagnation. It paints a picture of high inequality and slow growth, both of which are having a negative impact on low to middle income households. The report contains 10 key facts:

- 1 **Low growth:** real wages grew by 33 per cent a decade from 1970 to 2007 on average, but this fell to below zero in the 2010s
- 2 **High inequality:** income inequality in the UK was higher than any other large European country in 2018.
- 3 **The toxic combination:** low-income households in the UK are 22 per cent poorer than their counterparts in France, and typical household incomes are 9 per cent lower.
- 4 **Stalled progress:** 8 million young workers have never worked in an economy with sustained average wage rises, and those born in the early 1980s were almost half as likely to own a home as those born in the early 1950s at age 30.
- 5 **Levelling up:** income per person in the richest local authority – Kensington and Chelsea (£52,500) – was over 4 times that of the poorest – Nottingham (£11,700) – in 2019.
- 6 **Brexit Britain:** fishing output could shrink by 30 per cent by 2030 as a result of Brexit, but food and beverages manufacturing output could increase by more than 5 per cent.
- 7 **The nature of our economy:** Britain is the second largest exporter of services in the world, behind only the US.
- 8 **Good work:** half of shift workers in Britain receive less than a week's notice of their working hours or schedules.
- 9 **Staying put:** young people from the most-deprived areas are two-and-a-half times less likely to leave their home area upon reaching adulthood than their peers in the least-deprived places.
- 10 **Burden sharing:** wealth has risen from three to almost eight times national income since the 1980s, but wealth taxes have flatlined as a share of GDP.

Source: The Economy Enquiry 2030: “Stagnation Nation: Navigating a route to a fairer and more prosperous Britain. (July 2022).

Environmental

The Government, through the Levelling Up White Paper and subsequent Bill, has given a commitment to regenerating areas that have been ‘left behind’, including run-down town centres, and to reform the planning system to deliver better environmental outcomes for local communities.

PlaceShapers published a report entitled “Places after the pandemic” (September 2020), the content of which is based on research conducted by HACT regarding associations’ experiences. The main findings arising from the research included:

- The importance of partnership working to support customers
- The value of working at a ‘hyper local’ level with customers and communities
- The value of a more community focused operating model

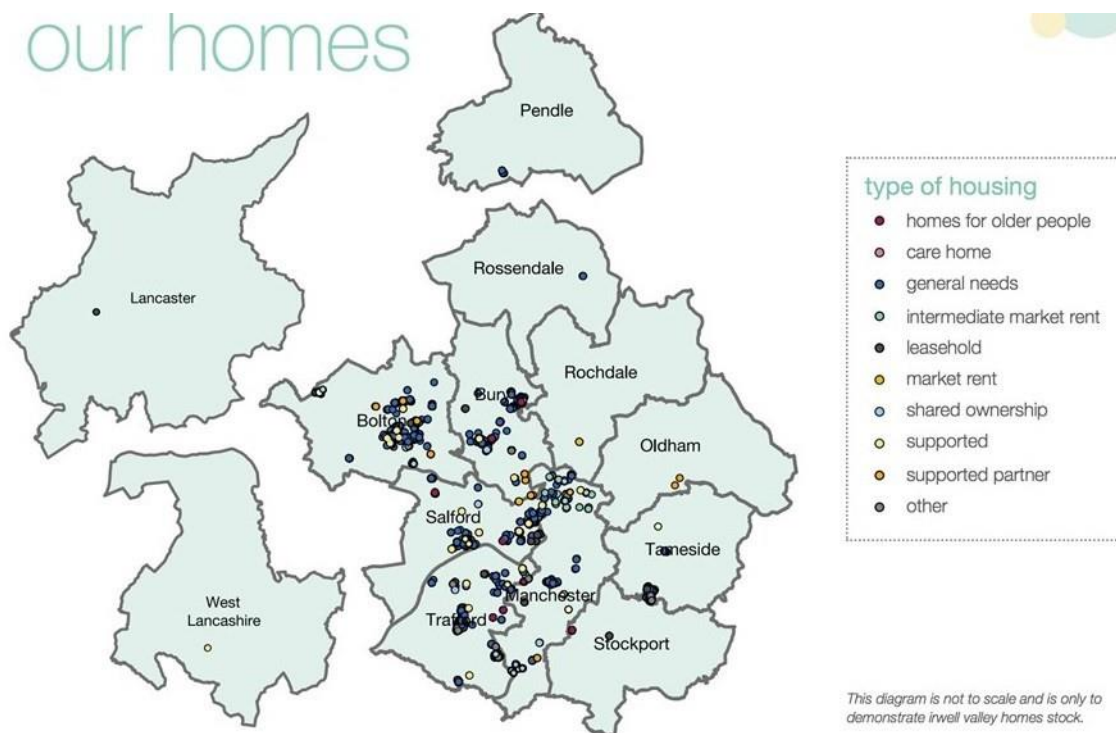
Maintenance of neighbourhoods is currently covered by RSH’s Neighbourhood and Community Standard, which requires social housing providers to keep local areas clean and well maintained. This requirement is re-iterated in the Social Housing White Paper (2020), which calls for landlords to provide well maintained, safe neighbourhoods for their customers. In addition, the proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) include questions about the standard of communal areas and customer satisfaction with the positive impact that their landlords have in their communities

IVH context

Our communities

IVH owns and manages over 7,500 homes most of which are spread across Greater Manchester, with small pockets of homes in Lancashire. Our homes are a mix of general needs social and affordable rent, 50 Plus, supported housing, market rent, intermediate market rent and leasehold.

Overall, we operate in 44 separate 'neighbourhoods' across our 6 key areas; these neighbourhoods vary in size from less than 10 properties to over 1,000. The areas where we have the largest concentrations of homes in a locality are Tameside (Haughton Green, Denton) and in Trafford (Sale). In the remaining key areas, our homes are either in clusters (Bolton and Bury) or more dispersed (Manchester and Salford).



Economic and social context

The Index of Multiple Deprivation provides an overview of relative deprivation across domains relating to a range of economic and social factors. The table below shows the average scores overall and by domain for all local authorities across GM in 2019, and indicates that of our 6 priority areas, Manchester, Salford and Tameside had the lowest average overall scores.

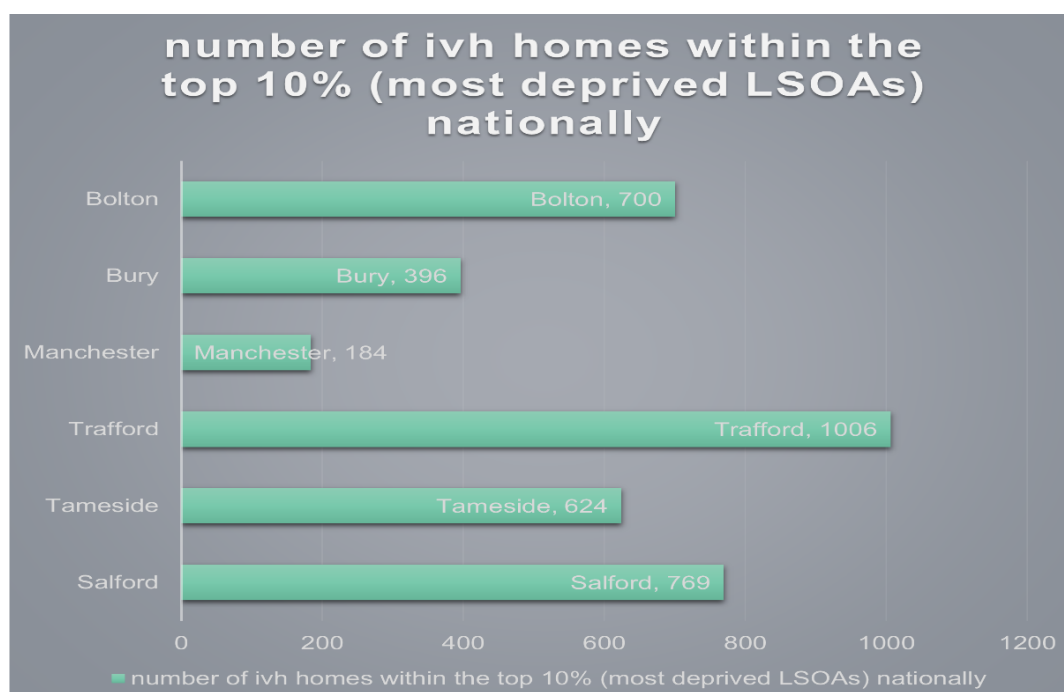
	Overall	Income	Employment	Education	Health	Crime	Housing Barriers	Living Environment
Bolton	34	29	36	90	50	13	285	80
Bury	95	83	57	164	84	50	277	124
Manchester	6	8	39	67	5	1	63	42
Oldham	19	21	32	23	40	5	307	61
Rochdale	15	15	16	43	21	2	231	149
Salford	18	24	30	44	12	16	218	94
Stockport	130	135	100	183	78	65	290	141
Tameside	28	37	37	61	19	12	270	93
Trafford	191	166	155	275	147	138	289	131
Wigan	75	77	50	86	46	59	300	248

The lower the number the more relatively deprived an authority is in the domain.

Source: GMCA report "Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019"

The IMD data is available at local area level, or Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). LSOAs are smaller areas containing on average 1,500 people or 650 households.

Overall, 56% (3,679) of IVH homes are located within decile 1 LSOAs (i.e., the most deprived 10% of LSOAs). The distribution of these across our 6 priority areas is shown in the table below.



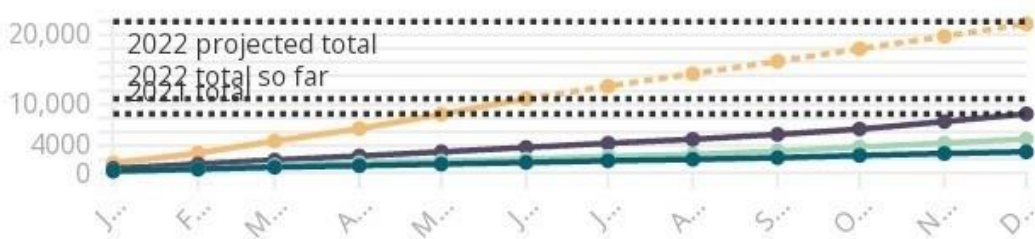
Fuel poverty is prevalent in the areas where our homes are located and is set to be further exacerbated by increasing energy prices.

	Nr of IVH properties in areas with above average levels of fuel poverty	% IVH properties in areas with above average levels of fuel poverty
Tameside	895	97%
Bolton	1125	97%
Bury	914	93%
Salford	1015	91%
Manchester	359	87%
Trafford	1588	81%

We are members of the GM Poverty Basics group, which received information from Citizens Advice about the deepening fuel poverty crisis. By the end of June 2022, Citizens Advice reported they had already seen more people who couldn't afford to top up their prepayment meter than in the whole of 2019, 2020 or 2021.

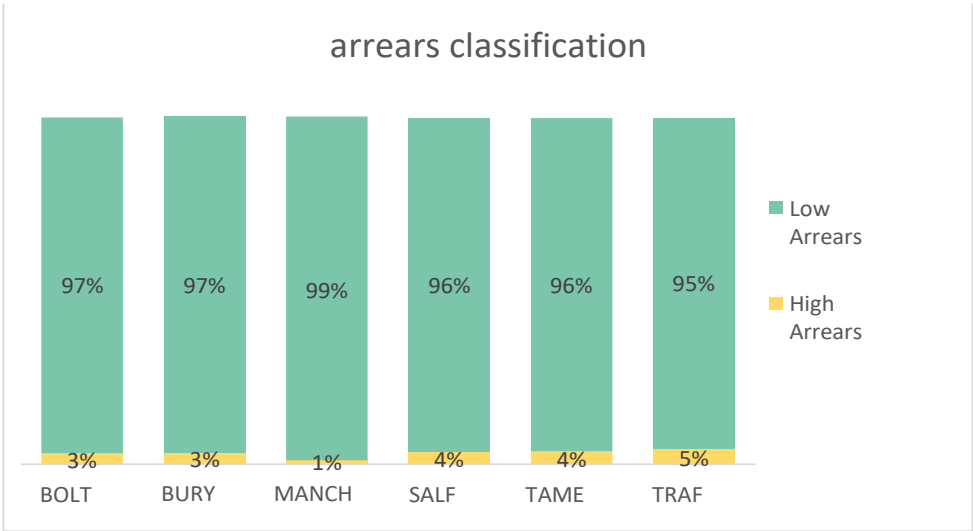
Cumulative number of people we've seen who've been unable to top up their prepayment meters each year

2022 2022 (Projected) 2021 2020 2019



citizens
advice

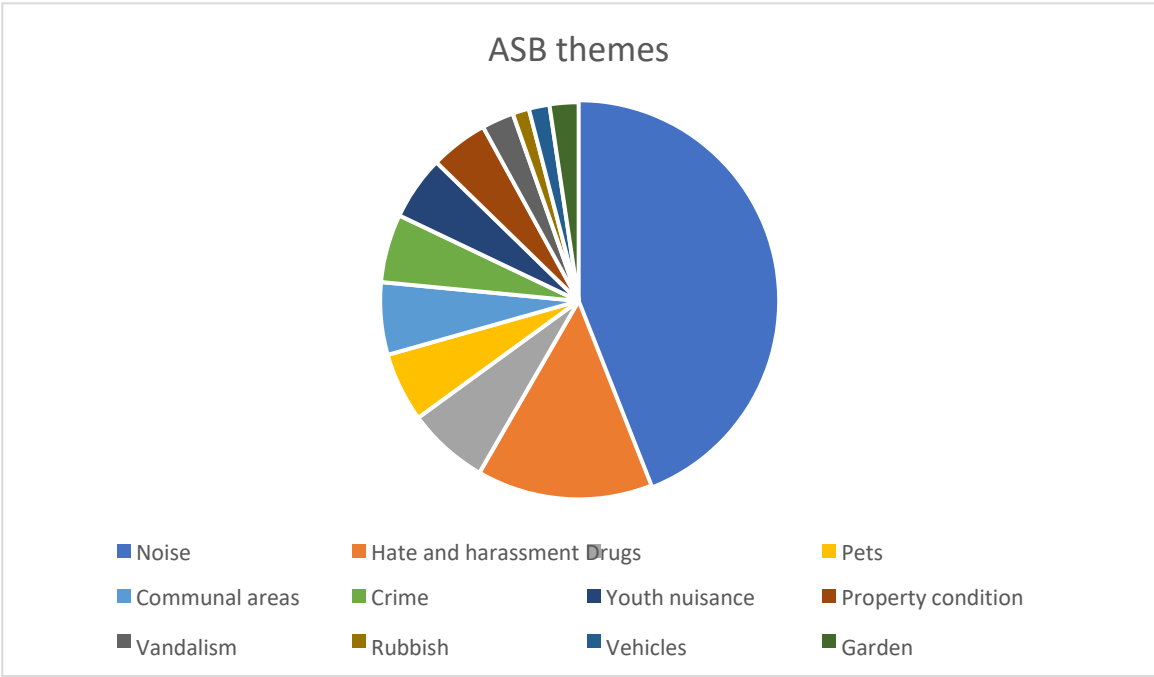
Rent arrears have risen significantly with an increasing number of customers moving from work to benefits since the start of the pandemic, rising from 1730 two years ago to 2,361 by July 2022 (an increase of 36%). Trafford has the highest proportion and number of customers in arrears at 38% but only marginally higher in percentage terms than Tameside (37%), Salford (36%), Manchester (36%), Bury (37%) and Bolton (34%).



Tackling ASB

All Community Co-ordinators deal with low level anti-social behaviour (ASB) enquiries in their area. In addition, we have a small team of Community Safety Officers who manage more complex and serious ASB and work closely with local authorities and multi-agency partnerships to address serious cases.

The number of cases reported to IVH increased during the pandemic; this trend has continued. 327 new ASB cases were opened in 2021/22. A further 115 new cases were opened in the first quarter of 2022/23, 30 more than the same period last year. Most cases relate to noise nuisance, hate crime and harassment, with the majority of cases being reported by customers living in Trafford.





Places to be proud of

The main neighbourhood services we deliver are:

- Grounds maintenance & cleaning, which are both contracted out
- Estate inspections and estate services

Cleaning and grounds maintenance

We measure satisfaction with our neighbourhoods and the services we deliver through the rolling perception survey. Satisfaction scores (out of 5) are lower than for other customer facing services. The main drivers of customer dissatisfaction relate to the performance of our cleaning and grounds maintenance contractors and the associated standards of cleanliness and appearance of areas. We have experienced a significant increase in complaints about these services.

Customer satisfaction scores:

- Neighbourhood as a place to live: 3.73
- How well we manage and look after neighbourhoods: 3.32
- How well we manage communal areas: 3.22

Estate inspections and services

Community Co-ordinators carry out quarterly neighbourhood inspections and raise any jobs or issues that need to be addressed, including communal repairs, cleaning and grounds maintenance issues, graffiti and rubbish removal. They also arrange for clean-up days in hot spot areas in their patches. More recently, we have allocated every colleague to a patch, so that each Community Co-ordinator now has colleagues from across the organisation who can assist in clean up days and implementing small estate improvements, with customers.

The small Estates Team plays an important role in carrying out general estate maintenance in our neighbourhoods, including planned and responsive activities such as:

- pick up litter
- deal with vandalism and graffiti
- remove dangerous waste such as smashed glass
- remove and investigate fly tipping
- carry out general estate clearing and cleaning
- cut and prune trees

Increasingly the team is responding to fly tipping and the poor condition of some bin areas resulting from council refuse collection arrangements and customer behaviours. As can be seen in the ASB themes chart above, we deal with a range of estate-based nuisance issues relating to rubbish dumping, vehicles, communal areas and gardens.



Delivering positive outcomes for communities

Addressing social and economic inequalities

We are committed to and actively involved in work across GM to address poverty. For example, we have signed up to GMHP's Anti-Poverty Pledge which shows our commitment to addressing economic and social inequality. A copy of the Pledge is shown in Appendix 1.

Some of the positive outcomes achieved by GMHP members include helping thousands of residents into work, supporting apprenticeships and Kickstart placements, helping residents to access unclaimed benefits and grants, developing affordable new homes, and supporting and rehousing homeless households and rough sleepers.

We carry out a range of activities to address social and economic inequalities, most of which has so far been delivered through our Community and Social Impact Strategy. These include:

- Providing financial inclusion and tenancy support for customers who are struggling with living costs and mental health, to help customers sustain their tenancy and live well in their homes and communities
- Working with partners, including other housing associations and public, voluntary, and charitable agencies to address social isolation, deliver training, help customers to access apprenticeships and employment, and to help customers to access affordable food, fuel, and furniture
- Using our community assets at Haughton Green (The Oasis) and Sale (Sunshine Café) to provide and host services and support, in partnership with a range of agencies. More recently, we have refurbished one of our commercial units in Bolton for use by a charity that provides support for young people who are disadvantaged
- Provision of grants through the Irwell Valley Foundation to support people and local community projects and initiatives

Examples of the support we provided in the last year includes the following:

- Food: 7,000 meals for school aged children in the Sale area, in partnership with Our Sale West, Trafford Housing Trust and the local council. We have also supported local food banks and fund a low-cost food service
- Fuel: working with HACT, we secured £40k of energy vouchers for customers in 2021/22
- Furniture: established a new furniture support service in partnership with local charity, Emmaus, which we contribute towards through the IVH Welfare Support Fund
- Financial: helped customers to access over £235k in benefits and grants to help sustain their tenancies.

An annual report is presented to Board each year setting out the full extent of our social and community investment activity, including work we do with partners.

Going forward, we will develop community plans for each of our 6 key areas, ensuring that we co-ordinate housing management, tenancy support, community investment, social value and grants, and tap into partnerships and funding opportunities to meet identified needs and customers' priorities in each area.

Each plan will include the following and will be bespoke to each area:



Characteristics	Objectives	Opportunities	Action	Monitoring delivery and outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers • Homes • Economic and social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed with customers and based on data and customer feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships • Commissioning • Investment and grants • Assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to be taken to address priorities identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local oversight - customers, partners and IVH • Board

We will develop plans for 4 priority areas during the life of this strategy, aiming to pilot our approach in 2023/24 in Tameside. We have prioritised this area for the following reasons:

- We are an anchor organisation and have a community asset there (The Oasis)
- Tameside Council has awarded IVH 'Lead Registered Provider' status in the Denton area
- Tameside has one of the lowest IMD rank average scores in GM and amongst our priority areas and fuel poverty is a significant issue in this area

Plans will be developed for a further 4 areas during the life of this strategy, and areas will be prioritised using IVH and IMD data. Plans for the remaining areas will be developed as part of the next communities strategy.

Places to be proud of

During the life of this strategy, we want to focus our attention on making our communities places that we and our customers are proud of. In addition to addressing the identified priorities in each community plan we will address:

Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance

Cleaning of our schemes and flatted blocks and grounds maintenance in our neighbourhoods are carried out by contractors. However, successive contractors have failed to consistently deliver the standards we and our customers expect. Therefore, in year 1 of this strategy we will work with the RSP to review the cleaning and grounds maintenance services and determine how we will deliver this service going forward, to ensure that customers receive the best value for money in relation to the service charges they pay.

Community focused operating model

In early 2022, we increased the number of Community Co-ordinators and reduced patch sizes to increase our presence in our communities and get to know our customers better. From year 1 of this strategy, Community Co-ordinators will work closely with customers, the Estates Team, colleagues from across the business, local authority partners and voluntary sector agencies to identify and address estate-based nuisance and to carry out small environmental improvements. As well as using the small budgets that each Co-ordinator is given for improvements on their patches, we will target planned maintenance budgets and leverage resources from our supply chain and partners to target investment more effectively in our areas.

Risks

The key risks to the delivery and success of this strategy are as follows:

- Engagement of partners, such as local authorities, in areas where we have fewer homes. We are an anchor organisation in few of our priority areas. However, we have a strong track record in delivering partnerships in relation to community investment and development activity and will build on these to ensure the successful development and delivery of our community plans.
- The current uncertain economic situation may affect the level of impact we can have. However, working more closely with partners will enable us to pool resources to collectively support communities.

Action plan & measuring success

A summary action plan is set out below, showing how we'll deliver the Communities Strategy and measure success. Detailed action plans will be developed for each Community Plan. Project plans are in place for the "Places to be proud of" projects and action underway.

Objective	Action	Year	Success measure
Address social and economic inequalities	Co-create a pilot community plan for Tameside, with customers and partners	1	Success measures will be identified for each plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction • Arrears levels • Tenancy turnover
	Launch first community plan, including monitoring and reporting arrangements Develop and implement 2nd community plan	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers rate us highly as a landlord • Customers rate us highly for having a positive impact in their communities • Partners rate us highly • Partners choose to work with us • Level of additional investment sourced and the associated positive outcomes for customers
	Develop and implement 3rd and 4th plans	3	
Places to be proud of	RSP complete review of cleaning and grounds maintenance services/estate maintenance, recommending how services should be delivered and standards required	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers say their neighbourhood is a good place to live • Customers say that service charges offer VFM • Customers say their neighbourhood is a good place to live • Level of complaints about cleaning and grounds maintenance services. • Improved value for money relating to cleaning and grounds maintenance services
	• Implement interim contract for cleaning services	1	
	• Implement new arrangements for cleaning services	2	
	• Implement interim grounds maintenance contract	2	
	• Implement new arrangements for grounds maintenance services	3	



Monitoring progress

Progress in delivering this strategy will be reported to Board bi-annually. In addition, we will set up panels involving customers and partners to oversee the development and delivery of each Community Plan, and the RSP will monitor our progress in delivering improvements in estate based services.



Appendix 1: GMHP Anti- Poverty Pledges

Our Anti-Poverty Pledges

Reducing Inequalities

We are committed to deepening our understanding of inequality issues, and to organisational change that will lead to improved outcomes for minority groups including those on low incomes. We will do this by:

1. Co-ordinating an approach to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage, in line with the principles of the socio-economic duty contained within Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010.
2. Adopting the principles of the socio-economic duty contained within Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 by assessing the socio-economic impact of our policy decisions. Specifically we will
 - Carry out meaningful impact assessments to understand residents' needs, including periodic reviews and mitigating any adverse impact.
 - Use data effectively as a tool in decision-making and accountability.
 - Engage with residents, civil society, and voluntary and community sector organisations to better understand need and to provide critical challenge.
3. Extending the successful Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Leadership Programme to make leadership pathways within our organisations fair, and to provide mentoring that gives BAME staff a voice and opportunities from which they were previously excluded.
4. Carrying out an annual survey of member organisations to measure approaches to managing and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, data collection and monitoring activity, and sharing good practice examples from across member organisations
5. Providing clear and accountable leadership to drive the changes that are needed.

Social Inclusion

Poverty is a key driver of social exclusion, which deprives people of choices and opportunities. We will increase social inclusion through the provision of support and services to reduce the impact of poverty. We will do this by:

6. Providing and promoting money advice services along with advice on energy use and fuel switching to help tenants and residents maximise their income and minimise their expenditure.
7. Working with GMCA, local councils and VCSE partners to ensure that there is access to emergency food aid for those who need it, and to identify longer term, more sustainable ways where we can support access to healthy and affordable food for all.



8. Reducing the digital divide through the provision of training, funding, and support for digital inclusion measures, and by engaging with the GMCA Digital Inclusion Task Force to maximise the opportunities available for our tenants and residents.

9. Reducing the financial burden on new tenants aiming to make a house a home by offering a range of ways to access free or affordable furniture, white goods and carpets, access to support with decorating for those who lack the capacity to do it themselves, and through our void standards.

Employment and Skills

Our services and support can be a springboard to a better life for some, through our job creation and training opportunities, and support into work for those who are distant from the labour market. We will do this by:

10. Working collaboratively to identify and deliver accessible pathways for tenants and residents to access jobs in the growth sectors of Digital and Zero Carbon.

11. Working collaboratively to support underrepresented groups into our construction vacancies and supply chains.

12. Creating job opportunities for all ages, with an emphasis on supporting those from vulnerable and diverse backgrounds that have been significantly disadvantaged.

13. Embedding employment support work across all our activities.

14. Delivering pathways into entry level jobs for our own tenants and residents.

Housing and Homelessness

We want everyone to live in a home that they can afford. To achieve that goal we will support the GMCA to deliver the new homes people need, we will make a substantial contribution towards reducing homelessness in the city-region, and we will provide homes and neighbourhoods we can all be proud of for our existing tenants and residents. We will do this by:

15. Providing safe, warm, and dry homes that meet or exceed the decent homes standard and by improving the energy efficiency of our homes to help tenants and residents reduce their outgoings and to support health inequalities.

16. Working collaboratively on development sites and schemes to maximise impact and reduce costs.

17. Developing ways to use Modern Methods of Construction to accelerate delivery of good quality new homes.

18. Continuing to prioritise the delivery of low-cost rented housing.



19. Using LetUs, our GM Ethical Lettings Agency, to reduce homelessness by increasing the number of good quality private sector homes available to rent.

20. Providing housing with support for rough sleepers and homeless people through the Next Steps accommodation programme, Ethical Lettings Agency work plan and Housing First programme.

21. Adopting an ethical disposals policy to ensure that social rented homes remain in the social rented sector wherever possible.

22. Continuing to support the development of a Community Led Housing Hub which provides advice and support to the growing number of CLH groups in GM.

Social Value

Through our core business activities and wider grant making and charitable initiatives, housing providers have significant procurement and funding budgets. We will use our influence and our role as Anchor Institutions to achieve social value outcomes that are relevant to our customers and communities. We will do this by:

23. Maximising the value of our procurement and supply chain by adopting and implementing the principles in the GMCA Social Value Policy.

24. Identifying ways to develop a local GM-based and resilient supply chain

25. Building capacity and sustainability in the voluntary and community sector through the provision of grant funding and access to training opportunities for tenants and residents.

26. Continuing to monitor our spend with non-profit organisations.

Fair Employment

Alongside our commitments to tenants and residents we aim to be employers of choice, where our workforce has equal access to quality work that is inclusive, fairly compensated, offers security and flexibility and cultivates an environment where health and wellbeing thrives. We will do this by:

27. Paying the real Living Wage

28. Seeking accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation as Living Wage Employers.

29. Signing up to the GM Good Employment Charter

Source: GMHP website