

# Annual Report 2017

great  
places  
HOUSING GROUP

Great homes. Great communities. Great people.





## Welcome

It's been another strong year for Great Places in delivering on our vision; **maximising our investment in sustainable homes, building successful vibrant communities and providing outstanding customer service and support.**

### Our key developments include:

- As one of the fastest growing housing associations in the North of England, we're responding positively to sector challenges. 2016/17 saw us build 625 new quality affordable homes during the year, invest £14.4m in existing homes, and continue to offer a range of quality services to our customers.
- Our business change journey, Building Greatness, continues and has seen the creation of a new model for our former Supported Housing service which includes rebranding it 'Independence and Wellbeing'. This better reflects what our commissioning partners and customers want from the service.
- We've purchased a new head office in Manchester – which will deliver savings of £250k pa.
- We've developed two new websites for Great Places and Plumlife to enable customers to self-service their tenancy needs around the clock.
- The introduction of our repairs materials distribution service continues to pay off, delivering an annual saving of £150k.
- We were delighted to receive further funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to develop another 872 new homes.
- We've maintained the (HCA) top financial viability rating of V1 and governance rating of G1 along with our A2 Fitch and A+ Moody's ratings.
- Our new corporate structure continues to bed in, supported by the appointment of three new directors. Our new structure places much greater emphasis on the customer and removes the potential for silo working. Supported by extensive investment in our leaders, we expect to see further change and improvement going forward.
- As a profit for purpose business we've made a conscious decision to do more than just collect rent. Our Social Investment Team continues to make real differences to people's lives, helping nearly 200 customers find jobs and supporting 180 customers into voluntary placements. We've also given information, advice and guidance to over 1000 people.

The Great Manchester Mayoral Election, the General Election and the preparations for Brexit have all meant change in our external operating environment. Despite this uncertainty we have the right foundations in place for success. Our 2018–2021 Corporate Plan, which is currently in development, will set out our ambitions for the coming years and ensure that we continue to deliver our social purpose as effectively and efficiently as possible.



**Matthew  
Harrison**  
Chief Executive



**Tony  
Davison**  
Chair

## About Great Places Housing Group

We have 650 colleagues who help manage over 19,000 properties across the North West and Yorkshire. Our portfolio includes affordable rented homes, market rent and sale, shared ownership, homes for key workers, and accommodation and services that promote independence and wellbeing for some of the most vulnerable people in society.

### The Group consists of:

- **Great Places Housing Group** – provider of central and corporate services such as finance, HR and Business Systems to all group members.
- **Great Places Housing Association** – general needs rented homes, resident services, and supported housing, now operating under our new 'Independence and Wellbeing' model to reflect a greater emphasis on empowering customers to live independently.
- **Plumlife** – property sales, managing our Shared Ownership and market rent portfolio, and leasehold services.
- **Cube Great Places** – developing new market homes for sale and rent.



### Our values

- We are fair, open and accountable
- We know, respect and care about our customers
- We appreciate the effort of everyone who works here
- We promote partnerships, efficiency and value for money
- We passionately embrace creativity, change and innovation



## Building Greatness

During 2016/17, Great Places continued to work to achieve our vision, embed our values and meet our corporate priorities. Together, these provide a clear route map for a successful future, a focus on what matters most, and an emphasis on being a profit-for-purpose organisation.

The focus on delivering the objectives set out in our corporate plan, while also adapting to significant political and economic changes (including four year 1% pa rent reduction), helped define our “Building Greatness” strategy.

This can be explained as:  
**“Our values-led journey of change, to ensure that we are always efficient and effective in delivering our vision”.**

One of the eight strands of Building Greatness is Business Transformation, which uses the Great Places change methodology to improve our efficiency and effectiveness as a business.



**150**  
customers involved  
in helping shape our  
website content

Building Greatness has impacted many of our business areas this year: **here is a snapshot of some of the group-wide highlights.**

### Data automation

We’ve automated our performance data to make it quicker and easier to access the information we need to make informed, integrated business decisions.

### Procurement and contract management

We’ve tightened up our approach to contract management to make sure greater savings hit the bottom line.

### Our new digital home

Our newly designed Great Places and Plumlife websites will enable customers to quickly and easily self-service their top needs whilst on the go.



### Our new head office

Our new Manchester head office will bring 350 colleagues from Salford and Manchester together under one roof and deliver a saving of £250k a year.



### Good governance

We have had an external review of our governance structure this year, which concluded that we have effective arrangements in place. We remain fully compliant with our code of governance, which is an enhanced version of the National Housing Federation Code.



### Our people

Our Leading Greatness training programme develops our managers and our investment in learning and development ensures that we have a skilled and fulfilled workforce.



## Great homes

Our development programme saw the construction of much-needed new properties in 14 local authority areas and provided homes for social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership, market sale and rent.

The work was partly financed with grants from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

We also secured further HCA funding through the Shared Ownership Affordable Homes Programme, totalling £18.1m for 872 new shared ownership, rent to buy and specialist homes across the next four years.

The re-procurement of the Innovation Chain North West (ICNW) contractors and consultants framework was completed and it now delivers services to 14 clients – with 32 consultants and 16 contractors on the framework. It is expected that construction work with a value of £500m will be procured through ICNW.

97.3%  
overall customer  
satisfaction with  
our new homes



Total  
investment of  
**£87.3m**  
into building  
new homes

**625**  
New homes

**377** Affordable rent  
**157** Shared Ownership

**58** Social rent  
**18** Market sales  
**15** Market rent



**64,000+**  
Customers living in our  
15,600+ General Needs,  
Supported Housing  
and shared ownership  
properties



## Repairs

Surveys show our customers value repairs above any other service we provide so we've invested heavily to ensure the service matches their expectations.

The set up of our own distribution centre two years ago is now paying real dividends in a host of ways.

This, coupled with investment into multi-skilling for our operatives, means more repairs are completed on a first visit, up from 64.9% to 85.2% in the last 12 months.

In addition we've also reduced our end to end repairs times from an average of 17.3 days in 2015/16 to 10 in 2016/17. Addressing these two key focus areas for customers and has led to an increase in customer satisfaction as well as delivering significant financial savings.



**92.3%**  
of customers were  
satisfied with our  
repairs service



We have reduced  
our operatives'  
mileage by  
**160,000**  
miles per annum



In 2016/17 our  
distribution centre  
delivered material  
cost savings of  
**£147k**



# PLUMLIFE.

Plumlife has had another record breaking year, completing 193 Shared Ownership sales – exceeding our target by 14 sales and generating an income of £13.1m.

We also sold 32 new homes outright – generating £922k surplus.

In total, Plumlife opened 11 new shared ownership developments in locations such as Manchester, Salford, Wigan, Preston, Sheffield, Altrincham, Oldham and Thornton Cleveleys.

The Plumlife management team is looking forward to launching the new corporate website in autumn 2017, and all team members have now completed their Institute of Residential Property Management (IRPM) qualifications to associate or member level.

95.3%  
of customers were  
satisfied with the  
service provided  
by Plumlife Sales

3,200+  
Shared ownership and  
Leasehold properties

Watch Laura's  
video here

Laura bought a three bedroom home through shared ownership, at The Firs development in Salford.





# cube.

Cube Great Places Ltd was established to undertake profitable activities to support Great Places' charitable objectives. Cube generated a £6.8m turnover during 2016/17. Of this, £454k was gift-aided back to Great Places and Cube retained a profit of £231k after tax.

Cube's development programme during the year included a new scheme at Radcliffe Road in Bolton and the acquisition of the large Melland Road site in Manchester. We also sold out all homes at Leesbrook in Oldham and fully let The Firs in Salford.

Cube is exploring innovative procurement methods and has recently entered into a joint venture on a large market sale scheme in Gorton, Manchester. The next 12 months will see the Cube brand developed, with plans for new homes in Gorton, Levenshulme and Alexandra Park in Manchester and Salford.



131  
homes planned for  
Melland Road,  
Manchester

£454k  
gift-aided back to  
Great Places



## Great communities

Who better to help us shape our services than the people who use them, our customers!

From mystery shopping and call audits to scrutiny reviews we've used customer experiences to help us improve our services. During 2016/17, 1621 customers were involved with shaping Great Places services. Our Social Investment Team continues to make real differences to peoples lives, helping nearly 200 customers find jobs

We are more than just a landlord, and do lots of added value work to help our customers achieve greater independence and wellbeing.



Find out  
more here

We recognise our customers efforts in helping improve the neighbourhoods where they live through our annual Community Stars Awards.

From a kayaking and outdoor pursuits instructor to a leathercraft specialist. Find out how our Residents' Fund helped Fallon get her dream business started.

Read Fallon's  
story here

2,579  
Customers supported  
in our directly  
managed Independence  
& Wellbeing services



Read Mark's  
story here

Pomona Gardens resident Mark Hewitson struggled with his mental health following the death of his mother. He battled substance misuse, generated debt and even attempted to take his own life. Thanks to the support from our Pomona Gardens scheme in Trafford, Mark has got his life back on track.



463  
Customers supported  
into accredited and  
non-accredited  
training



## Great people

Our 650 colleagues are our greatest asset so we continue to invest in developing their talent.

Appraisals linked to pay have been introduced for the first time following feedback from colleagues as a way to reward high performers.

We passionately embrace development and actively look towards the apprenticeship market to recruit enthusiastic young talent. During 2016-17 nine apprentices were employed with us, gaining on the job training to take us forward in the future.

Building great communities is at the heart of what we do and our colleagues have volunteered their time in numerous fantastic community projects. From refurbishing a derelict community garden in Northmoor to adding a spot of colour and painting the training room at Pomona Gardens, one of our Independence and Wellbeing schemes in Trafford.

We achieved a 95% response to our staff survey – and a 79% engagement score (against a UK average of 30%, as reported by Engage for Success).

Our people can share and discuss key issues affecting the business at the bi-monthly 'Voice' (colleague committee) meetings.



Read Liliana's story here

From apprentice to Neighbourhood Officer.



The Northmoor community clean up team.



Find out more here



## Critical success factors

The Great Places Board has identified 11 critical success factors (CSFs) which help us to monitor progress against the key business priorities detailed in our three-year Corporate Plan.

During 2016/17, we achieved nine of the 11 CSFs.



**22 days**  
average re-let time



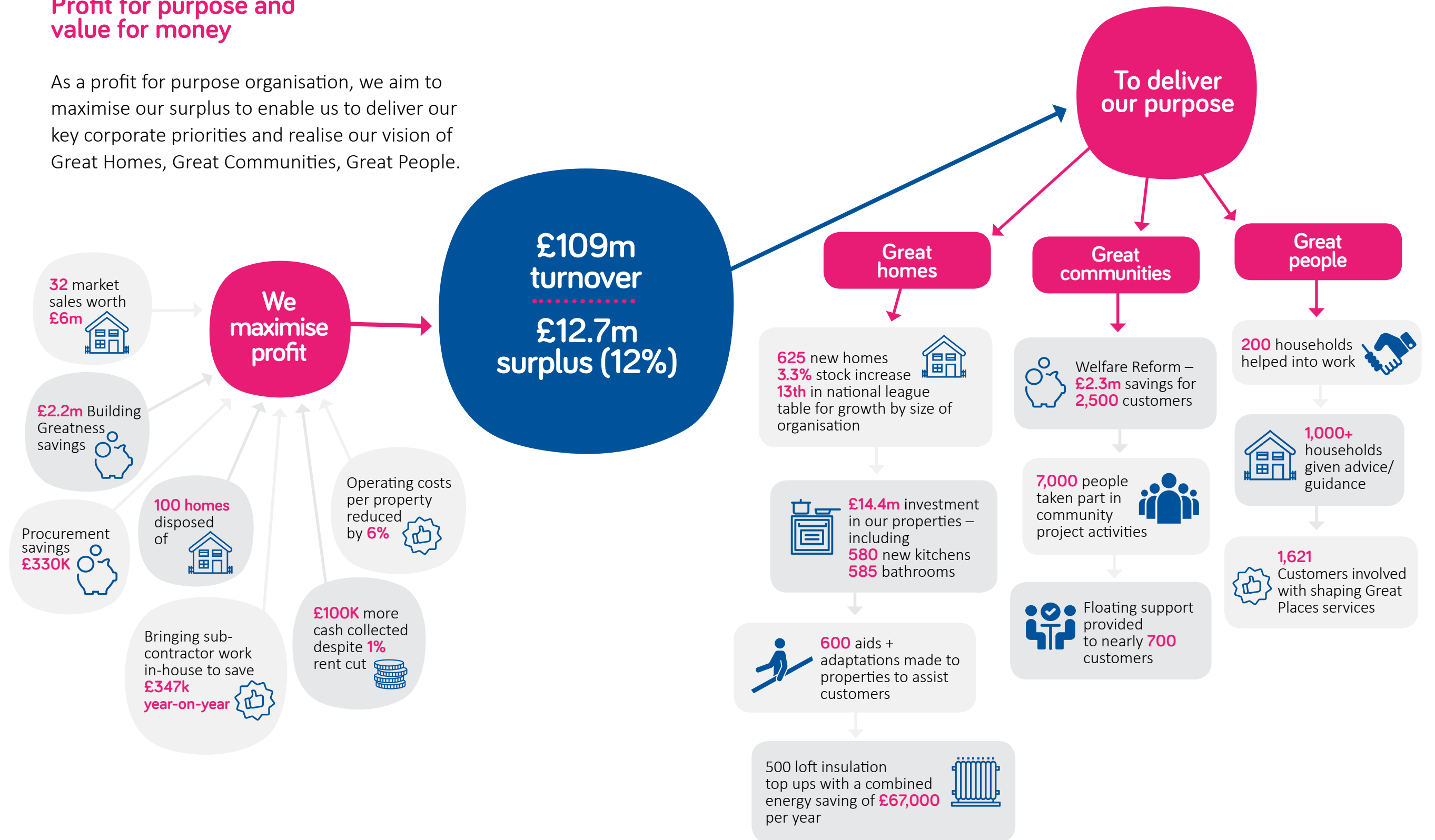
Record low arrears  
performance -  
improved from 3.3% to  
**2.6%**

Critical Success Factor	2015-16 Year end	2016-17 Minimum Target	2016-17 Stretch Target	2016-17 Actual Results	
Group surplus	£12.7m	£11.41m	£11.41m	£12.1m	Exceeded
Repairs satisfaction	91.2%	91.0%	93.0%	92.3%	Achieved
Stock condition surveys	82.3%	91.0%	94.0%	91.1%	Achieved
Average SAP rating	69.9	71.5	72.5	71.7	Achieved
Overall satisfaction	88.3%	88.0%	90.0%	86.1%	Missed
Current arrears incl HB	3.3%	3.7%	3.3%	2.6%	Achieved
Average re-let time (days)	23.9	24.0	22.0	22.1	Exceeded
GP new build completions	368	498	498	539	Exceeded
G1- V1 ratings	Maintained	Maintain	Maintain	Maintained	Achieved
Sickness days per employee	7.1	7.4	6.8	8.3	Missed
Households into work (incl tenants)	129	150	180	197	Exceeded



## Profit for purpose and value for money

As a profit for purpose organisation, we aim to maximise our surplus to enable us to deliver our key corporate priorities and realise our vision of Great Homes, Great Communities, Great People.





## Financial viability

We have continued to perform strongly and to make efficiency gains in 2016/17. HCA data shows us to be in the top quartile in terms of social housing cost per unit and we have maintained financial headroom to ensure we meet all funding covenants and remain resilient to change and uncertainty.

We have retained our V1 status with the HCA and our credit ratings with both Fitch and Moody's.

**FitchRatings**

A+ rating confirmed

**MOODY'S**

A2 rating confirmed





# Financial summary

All figures in £000s

	Group 16/17	Group 15/16
<b>Income</b>		
Gross income from lettings	84,328	82,946
Other turnover	25,090	20,973
Surplus on sale of properties	2,792	5,287
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>112,210</b>	<b>109,206</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>		
Services including Supporting People expenditure	9,399	10,064
Management	18,050	16,043
Maintenance	10,554	10,792
Major repairs	4,154	6,407
Cost of Sales	16,269	11,245
Other operating costs	19,613	20,527
Interest received	(261)	(265)
Interest paid	21,460	21,779
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>99,238</b>	<b>96,592</b>

<b>NET SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR BEFORE TAX</b>	<b>12,972</b>	<b>12,614</b>
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	Group 16/17	Group 15/16
<b>Assets</b>		
Housing Stock	1,174,730	1,139,447
Depreciation and impairment	(147,337)	(134,608)
Other fixed assets	25,520	20,258
Investments	9,158	9,939
Net current assets	45,838	28,364
Less loans and other liabilities	591,740	550,261
Less grant	467,550	473,686
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>48,619</b>	<b>39,453</b>

<b>Financed by</b>		
Revenue reserves	96,138	84,066
Other reserves	(47,519)	(44,613)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48,619</b>	<b>39,453</b>



# Senior team

## Executive Directors

**Matthew Harrison**  
Chief Executive

**Guy Cresswell**  
Executive Director Customer Services

**Peter Bojar**  
Executive Director Growth and Assets

**Phil Elvy**  
Executive Director of Finance

## Directors

**Alison Dean**  
Housing Services

**Craig Daniel**  
Business Intelligence

**Emma Richman**  
Assets

**Helen Spencer**  
Development

**Kal Kay**  
Finance

**Mark Foster**  
Repairs

**Neil Higham**  
Business Systems

**Nicola Parkinson**  
HR & OD

**Sally Watts**  
Independence and Wellbeing

**Simon Robinson**  
Housing Services

# Board

## Great Places Housing Group Board

Tony Davison Chair  
Jenny Rayner Deputy Chair/Chair of  
Remuneration and Appraisal Committee  
Jerry Green Chair of Audit and  
Assurance Committee  
David Robinson  
Celia Cashman  
Jan Fitzgerald  
Brendan Nevin  
Matthew Harrison

Note: Great Places Housing Association Board  
and Plumlife Board are coterminous with the  
Great Places Housing Group Board.

## Cube Board

Will Taylor, Chair  
David Robinson  
Matthew Harrison