

Annual report 2018

Great homes. Great communities. Great people.



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Welcome.

It's been another excellent year for Great Places, full of success and achievement for the business during a challenging and changing time. We are committed to delivering our vision: **maximising our investment in sustainable homes, building successful vibrant communities and providing outstanding customer service and support. Great homes. Great communities. Great people.**

These are just some of the ways in which we have done this over the past year or so.

- Launched our corporate plan which sets out our ambitions for the next three and ten years. Including building 8,000 homes in a decade
- We've had our G1/V1 status confirmed following the In Depth Assessment by the Regulator for Social Housing
- Invested £33m into building homes, with 304 completed and another 523 on site
- We are one of only eight organisations to enter a Strategic Partnership with Homes England - £30m additional grant means £100m more development spend and 750 extra homes
- Secured £150m from the Capital Markets through a bond tap
- We moved in to our new head office in Manchester – providing the business with a £250k a year saving and a modern working environment for colleagues
- Our Building Greatness journey continues and we began implementing new ways of working across the business, starting with our work in Independence and Wellbeing
- Conducted a stakeholder survey that told us our stakeholders want to do business with us
- Our very successful repairs Distribution Centre model expanded and provides a service to Trafford Housing Trust
- Continued to see strong sales performance, including selling out on all market sale projects
- Supported 1,000+ households into work or training; over 1,500 people took part in our community projects
- Our work with other organisations as part of the Greater Manchester Social Impact Bond has helped rough sleepers off the streets and into accommodation
- Launched new websites for Great Places and Plumlife

Great Places are trusted partners. We have the skills needed and a business model that allows us to be competitive in increasingly challenging and uncertain environments. Our new corporate plan states our ten year ambition, ensuring we will continue to deliver our social purpose as effectively and efficiently as possible.



Matthew Harrison
Chief Executive



Tony Davison
Chair



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About Great Places Housing Group

We have **580 colleagues** and we own/manage over **19,000 homes** across the North West and Yorkshire. Our portfolio includes social/affordable rented homes, market rent and sale, shared ownership, key workers' accommodation and supported housing that promotes independence and wellbeing for some of the most vulnerable people in society.

The group consists of:

- **Great Places Housing Group** – a provider of central and corporate services such as Finance, HR and Business Systems to all group members
- **Great Places Housing Association** – property management, customer and support services and community investment activity
- **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



Great homes
Maximising our investment
in sustainable homes.

Our vision



Great communities
Building successful, vibrant
communities.



Great people
Providing outstanding
customer service and support

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 - better for business, better for our customers

Building Greatness is our values led journey of change to ensure that we are always efficient and effective in delivering our vision.

During 2017/18, 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, on delivering the objectives set out in our corporate plan and an emphasis on being a profit-for-purpose organisation.

There are seven 'key themes' that make up Building Greatness, each of them headed up by a senior leader. In fact, Building Greatness involves everyone in the business in some way, shape or form as we look to make things better for the business and better for customers. As we deliver on our corporate plan and business objectives, here is a snapshot of some of the highlights of the past year:



Business Transformation

Business Transformation has rolled out across the business over the past year, with new ways of working being implemented in our Customer Services directorate and with a re-structuring of the Communications Team.



Service Delivery Framework

As part of Business Transformation we developed a new Service Delivery Framework which promotes clarity of purpose for both our Independence and Wellbeing and Neighbourhood teams and identifies the principles and behaviours through which we will deliver our services.



Customer Satisfaction

We adopted the ICS customer satisfaction measure to allow us to benchmark wider than just the housing sector. The most recent figures showed the all sector average across the UK was 7.8 and the housing association average was 7.1. Our overall customer satisfaction was 7.7. Ahead of the sector and on track for corporate plan targets.



The Digital Experience

We are moving into a digital world at pace. We saw a 20% reduction in telephone calls received year on year and a corresponding rise in all digital contact. The survey again backs up our vision: the most satisfied customers were those that focused on the digital experience.



Customer Communication

Our new ways of working align well with the way in which customers want to communicate with us. In a recent UK Customer Service Institute (ICS) Satisfaction Survey the key drivers for satisfaction for the top ten performing businesses were: making it easy for customers to do business with them; trust; ease of making contact; staff helpfulness and competence; speed of response.



Our Building Greatness journey is helping us save money too. The Great Value group scrutinises our Value for Money (VFM), procurement and contract management activities and has helped deliver over **£1m in savings by the end of March 2018**, with another **£1m forecast for the 2018/19 financial year**.

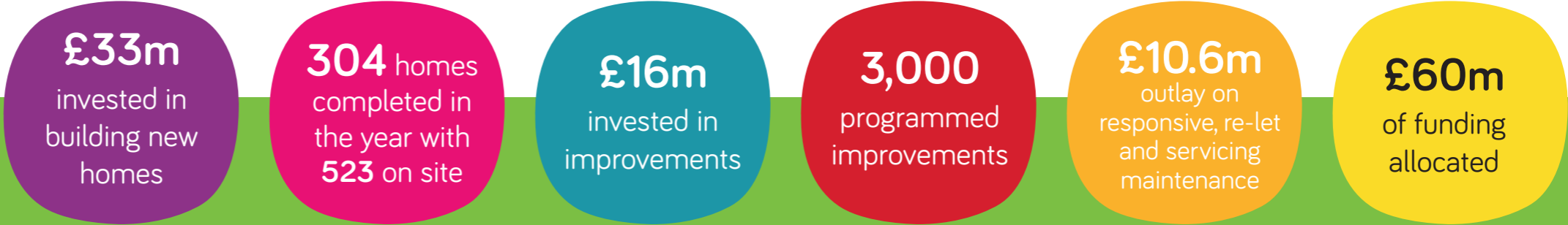
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Great homes

We want to help to tackle the housing crisis by building as many homes as possible. That's why our new corporate plan says that we will build 8,000 homes over the next ten years.

This past year over **£33m** was invested in building new homes, with **304** completed in the year and another **523** on site. A further **£16m** of investment facilitated nearly **3,000 programmed improvements** to over **1,900 properties** in the existing portfolio, whilst there was also **£10.6m** outlay on the Group's responsive, re-let and servicing maintenance activities. The business allocated close to **£60m of funding** to expand or improve the homes it provides.

We are also part of a landmark strategic partnership with Homes England which will see Great Places build **750 additional affordable homes** across the North over the next four years. [READ MORE HERE](#)



Completions



On site



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PLUMLIFE.

Plumlife had another excellent year completing 106 shared ownership sales and 35 market sales generating an income of £7.5m.

Properties were sold across 19 different developments including in Lancaster, Bury, Cheshire, Salford, Manchester, Fylde, Ribble Valley and Wigan.

It's been an award winning year too, with Plumlife's brand new website being voted best in class in an international competition.

And customer satisfaction with the service provided by the sales team has also gone up from 95.3% to 99%

99%

of customers were satisfied with the services provided by Plumlife Sales

Market sales generated revenue of
£7.5m



Plumlife help Louise get her foot on to the property ladder.

[Read more here...](#)



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cube.

Cube Great Places Ltd is the market facing arm of Great Places. It was established in 2007 to carry out profitable activity — producing funds which can then be used to subsidise our charitable activities. It develops homes for market sale and private rental, often on mixed tenure schemes including affordable housing, or as joint ventures with other partners.

In 2017/18 Cube generated a turnover of £3.1m, and a profit of £0.7m, of which £300k was gift-aided back to Great Places. Cube retained a profit of £442k after tax to support its activities.

The Cube brand has developed strongly over the past twelve months or so with new developments secured across the region including the Kingsway site in Levenshulme, Duchy Rd in Salford and Arkwright Place in Gorton – the biggest single development Great Places has ever undertaken.

Cube isn't just about new homes. Cube also manages private rented homes and provides estate management services, and this year secured the contract to manage public realm in New Islington, Manchester

Generated annual turnover of

£3.1m

in 2017/18



Gorton MP visits record-breaking Manchester development

Read more here...

Cube secure planning for 31 homes on The Kingsway

Read more here...



Repairs

Our surveys tell us that our customers value repairs above any other service we provide. That's why it's great news that our materials supply and distribution centre, coupled with investment into training, continues to improve performance which leads to greater customer satisfaction.



Great Places and Trafford Housing Trust begin pioneering partnership

[Read more here...](#)

86.1%
of repairs were
carried out first time

Customer
satisfaction has
risen to
93.8%

Over **38,000** repairs were carried out in 2017/18, and our team completed **86.1%** of these genuinely first time – a record. We also reduced our end to end repairs times from an average of 10 days to 8.6 days over the year.

That's why customer satisfaction with our repairs service has gone up to **93.8%** - and we are also saving money.

The success of the distribution centre has also seen Great Places begin working in a pioneering partnership that has seen the Group supply materials to the repairs service of Trafford Housing Trust.



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Performance matters

Our focus on performance is also reflected in the near 100% collection of all rent due over the year (99.7%) And the standard of the homes we offer is clear: 816 re-lets at an average of 21 days per re-let (better than the end of year target).

We have also just celebrated being three years 100% gas compliant – which means every single one of our tenanted homes has been gas safety certificated every day of the year for the past three years.

100%

gas compliant for
three years

99.7%

of rent due was
collected over the year



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Great communities

The work of our neighbourhood teams and the success they have working with customers across our regions, helps Great Places build the successful, vibrant communities our customers want to live in. Our focus is on our five anchor neighbourhoods, where we feel we can have the greatest positive impact.

And at Great Places we are more than just a great landlord. Our promise is to 'work with and not for' our customers and ensure that we support those that need it most, doing lots of added value work to help them achieve greater independence and wellbeing for themselves and their communities.

Through our Social Investment activity we have continued to make a real difference to people's lives: providing employment, training and volunteering opportunities for our own customers and for other people living in our communities.



The work done by our Independence and Wellbeing team helps some of the most vulnerable people in society achieve greater freedoms living in our communities. One of the ways in which we do this is through our work with the **Social Impact Bond (SIB)**, a ground-breaking partnership which helps rough sleepers in Greater Manchester to start a new life off the streets.



This way in which we work ensures we are helping those that need it most. Working alongside St. Wilfrid's Centre, back in September last year we opened **St Wilfrid's Place** in Sheffield, to provide accommodation for vulnerable people and encourage adults with a history of homelessness into independent living. The support service we offer there is really changing people's lives.



And every year the relationships we enjoy with our customers and our communities are celebrated with our **Community Stars awards** – one of the highlights of the year.



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Our 580 colleagues are our greatest asset: they drive our success and help us achieve our short and longer term ambitions. That's why we continue to invest in developing talent, to provide excellent training programmes that enable us to recruit, support and reward a diverse and high performing workforce.

Colleagues passionately embrace our values and work with customers on a variety of volunteer projects that help create and sustain the great communities we strive for.

Our Learning and Development team have worked imaginatively and compassionately with colleagues throughout a challenging year of change, to ensure the health and well being of colleagues is a priority. This culture of collaboration has resulted in 71% of colleagues saying they felt fully engaged in their role at Great Places, when the most recent engagement survey took place in February 2018.

71%
of colleagues felt fully
engaged in their role



Great Places Colleague
Conference 2017

**Read more
here...**



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Critical success factors

Each year the Great Places Board identifies **critical success factors (CSFs)** to help us monitor progress against key business priorities detailed in our corporate plan (2015-18). It helps the business measure our success, what we are doing well and also where we need to improve.

During 2017/18 we achieved, or exceeded, eight of our eleven targets.

Critical success factor	2016/17 year end	2017/18 target	2017/18 result	Year end position
Overall satisfaction	n/a	7.4/10	7.75/10	✓
Repairs satisfaction	92.3%	93.0%	93.8%	✓
Stock condition surveys	91.1%	100.0%	100.0%	✓
Number of properties below band D	369	246	216	✓
Group surplus	n/a	£12.2m	£10.4m	✗ *
Current arrears (including HB)	2.6%	2.9%	2.8%	✓
Average re-let time (days)	22.1	24.0	21.0	✓
GP completions	539	252	254	✓
Building Greatness savings	£2.1m	£2.7m	£4.5m	✓
Sickness days per employee	8.3	7.4	11.7	✗
Households into work (including tenants %)	197 (58%)	197 (50%)	261 (43%)	✗ **

* The target surplus would have been exceeded other than for the impact of the one-off disposal of poor quality legacy properties.

** We exceeded the target for number of households into work but just fell short of our target for 50% of these to be Great Places tenants.



Profit for purpose and value for money

We are a profit for purpose organisation and aim to be as efficient as possible so that we remain a top-quartile performer across the sector. We then choose to use our surplus to go far beyond our landlord obligations so that we realise our vision of building Great homes, that help create Great communities, supported by Great people.

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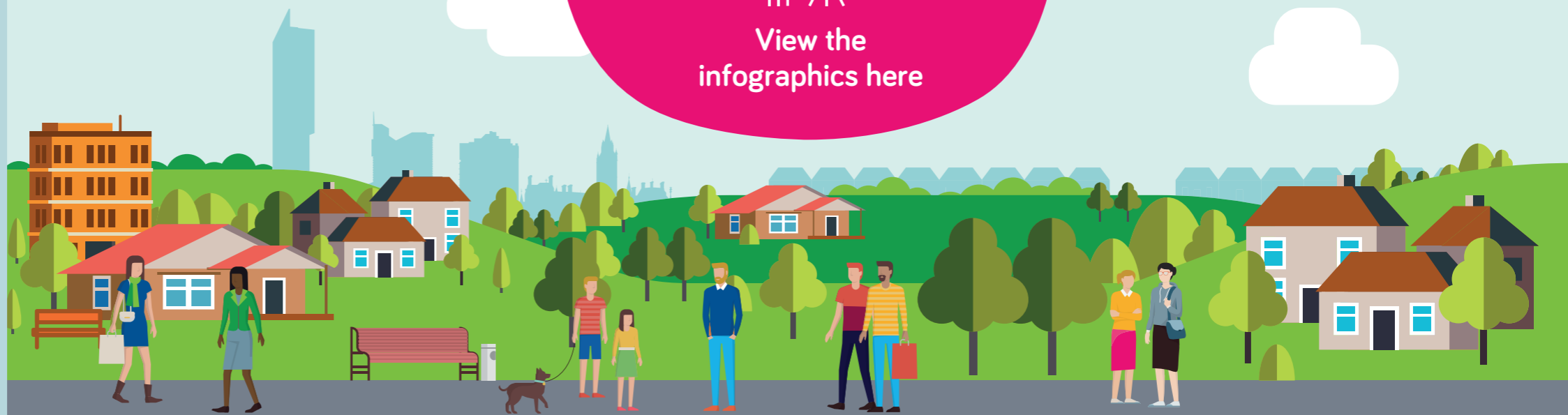
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Great Places makes
**profit for
a purpose**



View the
infographics here

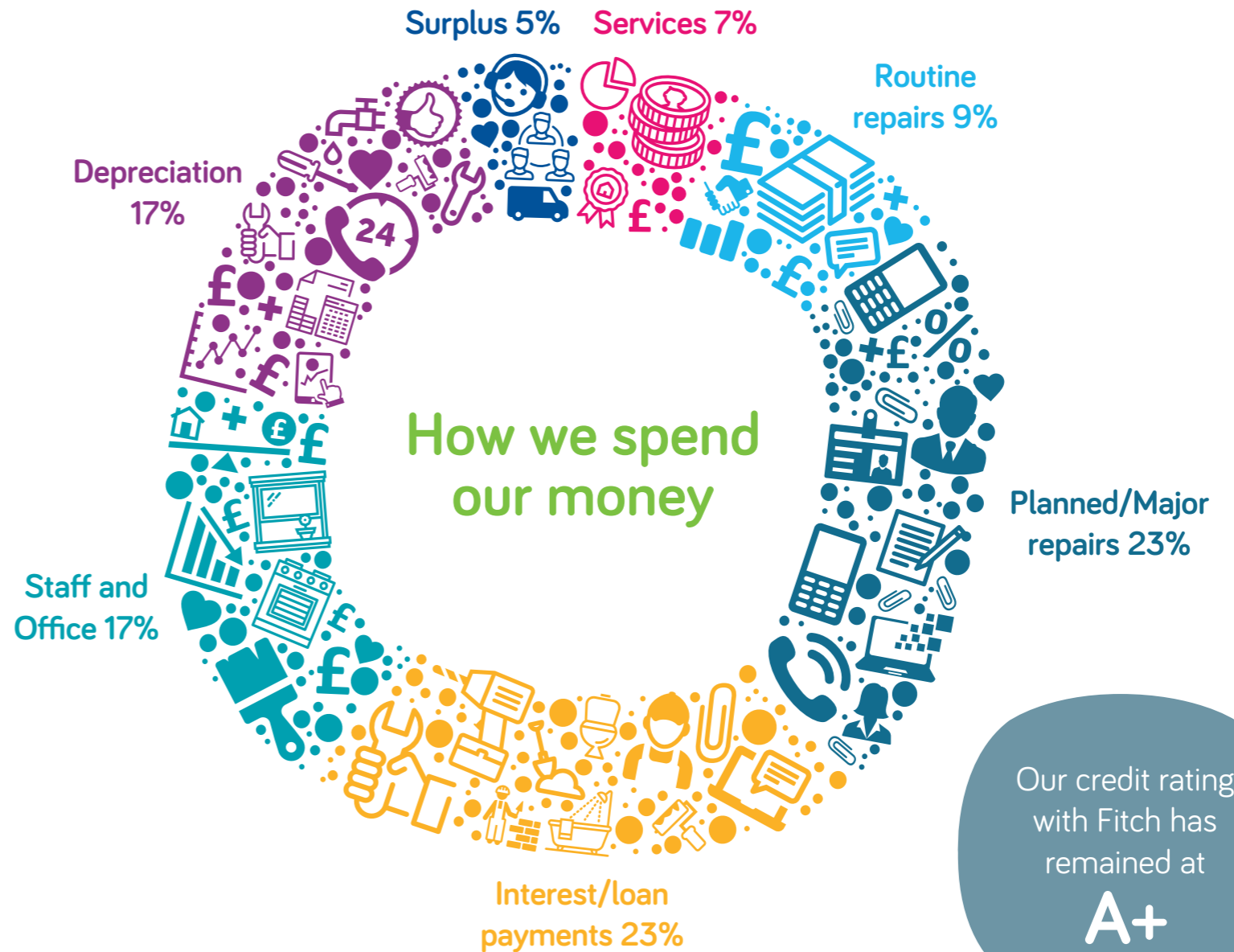


Financial viability

This year we have continued to achieve savings to ensure out long term viability.

The Building Greatness programme maintains the focus on achieving further savings going forward. The Regulator for Social Housing benchmark 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.

We have retained our V1 status with the Regulator. Our credit ratings with both Fitch (A+) and Moody's (A3) have been retained since our bond issue in March 2018, although the Moody's rating dropped one notch during 2017 due to a sovereign downgrade.



Our credit rating with Fitch has remained at **A+**



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Board and senior team

Executive Directors

Matthew Harrison – Chief Executive

Peter Bojar – Executive Director of Growth and Assets

Guy Cresswell – Executive Director of Customer Services

Phil Elvy – Executive Director of Finance

Directors

Craig Daniel – Business Intelligence

Alison Dean – Customer Experience

Mark Foster – Repairs & Facilities Management

Kal Kay – Finance

Nicola Parkinson – HR & OD

Richard Priest (Interim) – Business Systems

Emma Richman – Assets

Simon Robinson – Neighbourhoods

Helen Spencer – Development

Sally Watts – Independence & Wellbeing



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

Celia Cashman

Jan Fitzgerald

Matthew Harrison

Brendan Nevin

David Robinson

Sam Young

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

Cube Board

Will Taylor – Chair (to July 2018)

David Robinson – Chair (from July 2018)

Babar Ahmed

Matthew Harrison

www.greatplaces.org.uk

Follow us on:

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 twitter.com/MyGreatPlace

Great Places Housing Group
2a Derwent Avenue
Manchester
M21 7QP

