



2021 - 2024

Strategic Plan

Because everyone should have a decent home

Foreword

We believe that this Strategic Plan sets out an ambitious and exciting future for mhs homes group.

The Plan represents a step up in pace and ambition while recognising the very significant impact of:

- The COVID-19 pandemic
- A growing housing crisis
- Increased importance of consumer standards
- The importance of making sure the voice of our customers is heard
- New building safety requirements
- The UK's commitment to net zero carbon by 2050

The Social Housing White Paper published in November 2020 sets out the policy direction for the next few years. We know that many important elements of the White Paper will take considerable time to develop.

However, we don't need to wait to be told what to do - we have a clear view on what needs to be done and this Plan sets out our response.

In the next three years, we'll:

- Build 660 new homes
- Develop excellent services in partnership with customers through our Service Deal offer
- Start delivery of our new Green Homes Plan
- Make sure that we continue to be well managed and financially strong

None of this would be possible without the talented colleagues we have in #teammhs and the support of our wonderful partners.

We believe that an effective landlord needs to be rooted in the neighbourhoods where it operates. mhs homes group is an important anchor organisation in the communities we serve, and this will continue. We also know that by being an agile and digitally-enabled organisation, we can respond quickly to the world around us.

Looking beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe that mhs homes group, as a leading housing charity, has a very bright future. We'll only be limited by our own imagination, drive and determination.



Ashley Hook

Chief Executive



Richard Cooper

Chair of the
mhs homes group Board

Who we are

mhs homes group is a charitable housing

association (registration number: 1177565).

We're unique in being the largest social landlord

not registered with the social housing regulator.

Within the group we have a subsidiary, **Heart of Medway Housing Association**, that's registered with the **Regulator of Social Housing** (registration number: 4634).

We provide and manage

9,500 homes



on the south side of the **Thames Estuary in north Kent** -
a vibrant area of opportunity and growth.

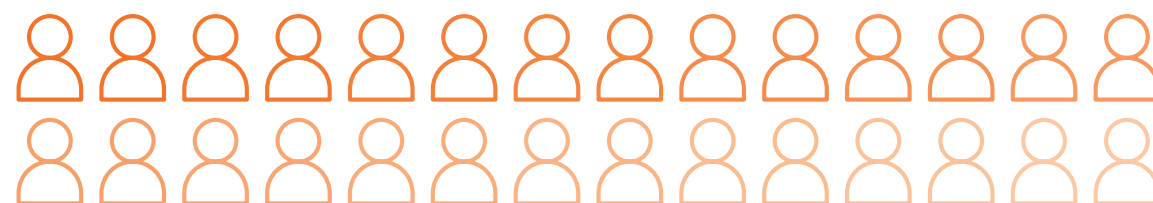
Over 25,000 people

live in our homes



We employ

280 talented colleagues

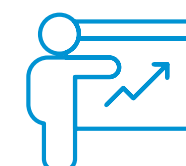


who together are the unstoppable **#teammhs**.



We have an annual turnover
of £62 million

and will invest **£175 million** in new
and existing homes over the next
three years.



The group Board is committed

to retaining the independence
and unique structure of mhs
homes group.

Our purpose

**Some organisations have a vision and mission
- we have an ultimate ambition.**

**Our ultimate ambition is to help end the housing crisis in north
Kent by providing safe and sustainable homes.**

What we do isn't complex but it does have a massive impact on the wellbeing and life chances of our customers.

As a leading housing charity, we have a responsibility to use our resources effectively to tackle the housing crisis, help those in housing need and provide safe and sustainable homes.

Our ultimate ambition is underpinned by our belief that decent housing should be a basic human right.

**We do what we do because "everyone should have
a decent home".**



Our values

Our CREATES values underpin how we behave and operate.

C

Community

We're **community-focused** and are driven by a clear social purpose.

R

Respect

We respect the **diversity of our customers and one another**. We know this diversity brings creative advantage and innovation; we won't tolerate any type of discrimination.

E

Excellence

With a **'can do' attitude**, we strive for excellence and to be the best in all we do.

A

Agility

We're agile and light on our feet; our success depends on the **ability to respond quickly and effectively** to new challenges and opportunities.

T

Teamwork

We succeed together as **one team**; we all take personal responsibility for contributing to #teammhs.

E

Enjoyment

We **enjoy what we do**, we enjoy helping our customers; while we have a serious job to do, we don't take ourselves too seriously!

S

Sustainability

We make sure that what we do has a **positive impact** on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

The strategic environment

This Strategic Plan is launched at a time when we're in the midst of the worst global pandemic in a century.

While we look forward to the rollout of COVID-19 vaccination programmes and a brighter future with hope, we also acknowledge that the pandemic will shape the world for many years to come.

We're also mindful that the pandemic has left many of our customers out of work, in financial hardship, vulnerable and socially isolated. COVID-19 has amplified social inequality and deprivation. We don't yet know how the UK economy will bounce back but we do know that public expenditure will be under increased pressure as the Government seeks to address the budget deficit created by COVID-19 recovery costs.

Our investment of £150 million in existing and new homes over the next three years will help bolster the regional economy. The housing crisis has worsened during the pandemic and this places a responsibility on us to use resources wisely to maximise the delivery of new affordable homes (albeit in a far riskier environment).

As an organisation, we must learn from our experiences during the pandemic and how this'll make us more resilient and impactful. What we've learnt so far is that we've:



Displayed great **determination, agility** and **teamwork**.



Been able to reach out and help **vulnerable customers** beyond our traditional landlord role.



Accelerated our **digital capability** faster than we expected pre-virus.

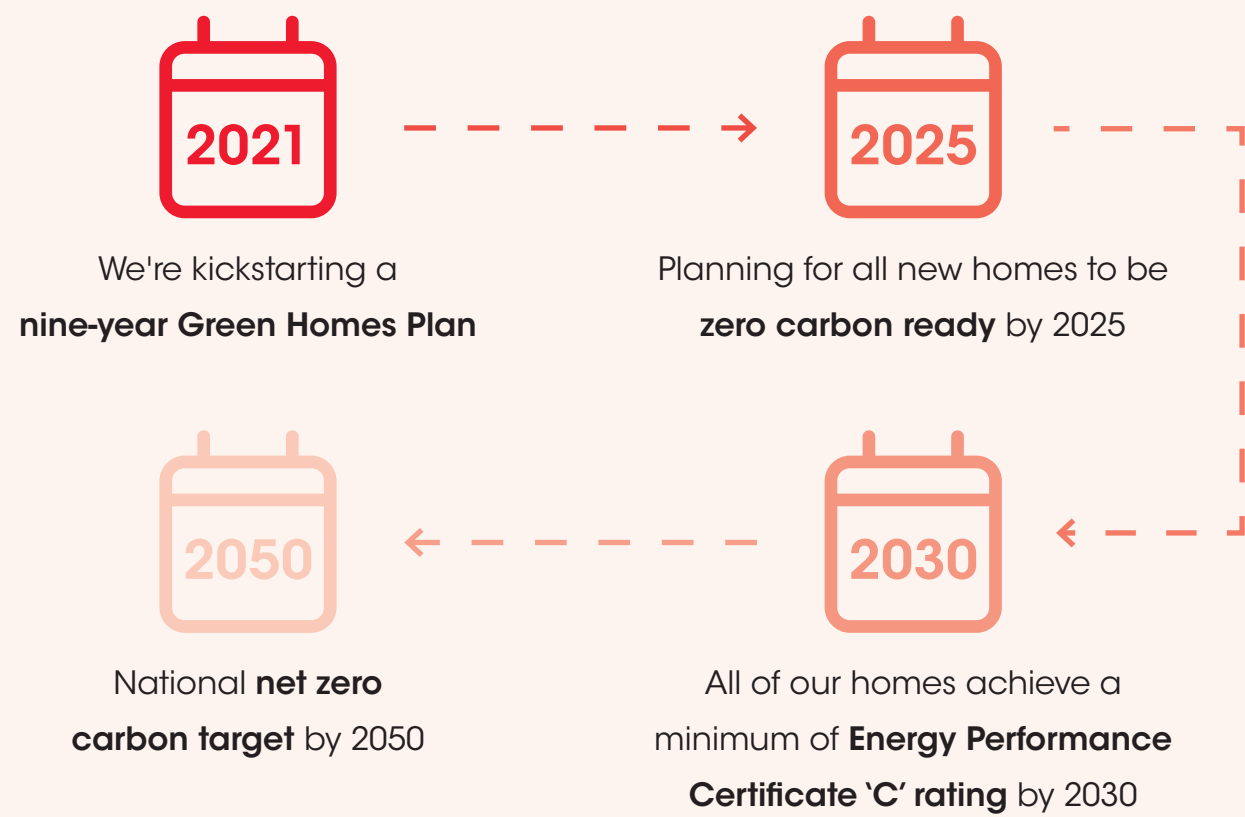


Worked closely with **key partners** to show strong and **effective community leadership**.

These are all strengths that we want to build on in this Plan.

This Plan is also shaped by the considerable investment we'll direct at improving the energy efficiency of our homes and building safety.

Our Green Homes Plan will allow a phased approach to maximise current investment, external funding and flexibility as retrofit technology improves.



In the aftermath of the Grenfell tragedy, we must make sure all of our customers feel informed and safe in their homes.

Our customers' wellbeing is our greatest priority.



Building and fire safety are key themes throughout this new Plan.

We don't just want to achieve compliance; we want to strive towards excellence and be exemplary in all areas that affect the safety of our customers.

Our strategic priorities

We have five interlinked strategic priorities. These are to:



Provide safe and sustainable homes



Be a caring and visible landlord



Focus on the customer's voice and community leadership



Have a talented, digitally enabled and customer focused workforce - #teammhs



Have organisational resilience and agility



Our core business

Our ultimate ambition is to:

**help end the housing crisis in north Kent by
providing safe and sustainable homes.**

**This Plan is therefore focused on meeting housing
need and tackling homelessness by providing safe
and sustainable homes.**

To achieve this, we're committed to doing what we're best placed to do
and where we can add most value.

Our core business is:



Affordable
rented homes



Shared
ownership homes



Supported Living
Foyers



Supported Living
older persons
housing

As part of our Investment Policy,
we also have a **market rent portfolio**.

**We're always open to new ideas and new ways
of doing things.**

However, we know what we're good
at and when we need to work in
partnership with others to draw on
their expertise and experience.
We're open for business and

constantly looking for growth through
new opportunities and stock transfer
from other providers. If you have an
opportunity you'd like to talk to us
about, please contact us.

Our areas of operation

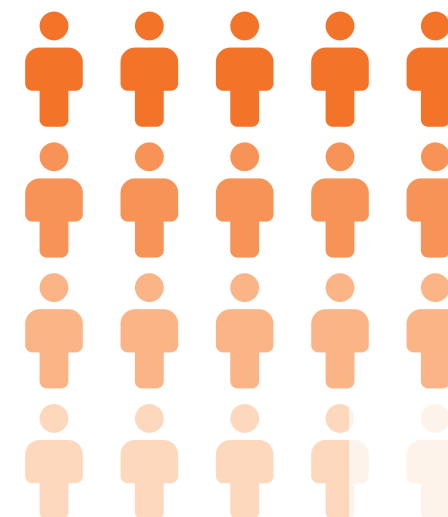
A key part of our success has been to operate in a focused geographical area.

This allows us to be a visible partner making a big difference at a local level. It also means we can deliver excellent services cost effectively.

We're located south of the Thames Estuary in north Kent – an area of exciting growth and regeneration.

The proximity of north Kent to London and excellent transports links makes the area one of the largest growth areas in the UK.

It's also an area of considerable housing need – where the need for safe, sustainable and affordable homes has never been greater.



Between 2011 and 2031,
the population of north
Kent will have increased
by 187,000 people.

Our role is to help make sure people have a decent home.

Our operating model

Our approach to being a caring visible landlord is to combine the 'best of both worlds'.

1

Excellent

face-to-face services

In 2019, we changed our operating model for housing management services. We moved away from functional specialisms and a traditional geographic 'patch based' approach.

In its place we launched a digitally enabled Customer Team. They make sure the right colleagues are in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills to support our customers.

2

Great self-serve

digital services 24/7

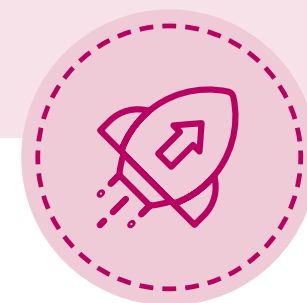
Our new approach strips away unnecessary complexity which often adds cost and increases service variability.

We've focused on what adds value for the customer.

Our new approach - called the Service Deal - was a brave decision.

It's not always been easy and we're still on the journey. However, huge progress has been achieved and the impacts have been transformational.

Our capability and agility to react effectively to the pandemic lockdowns was testament to this.



The next stage of our journey will be to launch our new **Service Deal Offer** to our customers.



This will be **developed for and with customers** as part of our commitment to putting the voice of our customers at the heart of what we do.



A crucial part of our operating model and success is the Direct Labour Team. They deliver our frontline services:



Repairs



Empty homes



Kitchens and
bathrooms



Estate services

Direct labour allows us to be in direct control of speed, quality and customer experience as well as providing VAT savings on the labour cost of these services.

#teammhs

What sets a great organisation apart from a good organisation is the people working for it – we call them #teammhs!

Our success depends on having a **talented, digitally enabled** and **customer focused** workforce. We want to recruit and keep the best talent.

We hire for a **positive ‘can do’ attitude**. We trust people to do their jobs and make the right decisions for our customers.

We expect #teammhs colleagues to commit to our **CREATES** values and leadership behaviours.



We'll provide a great place to work offer that rewards colleagues fairly and encourages each and every #teammhs member to fulfil their potential.



Our environment

We want to create a work environment that is **inclusive, engaging** and **fun**.

The next three years

Over the next three years, our operating costs will come under pressure. This means that we'll need to become more **cost effective** just to stand still.



We know that by having an innovative, highly engaged, talented workforce, we can improve our productivity and cost effectiveness.

Strategic priority one:

Provide safe and sustainable homes

By 2024 we will:

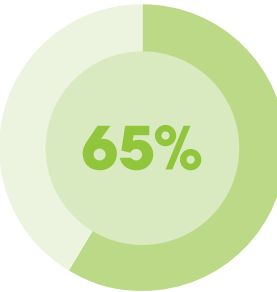
Build 660 new homes



Deliver our Green Homes Plan so that:



All new homes commissioned from **April 2021** will be built to **EPC band 'B'** and where possible, **zero carbon ready**.



65% of our homes are at least **EPC band 'C'**.



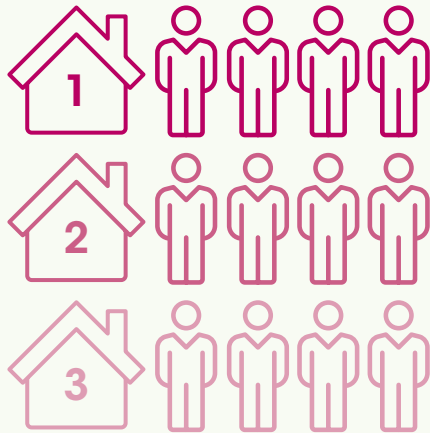
Trial **retrofit technologies** to increase the sustainability of existing homes.



Tackle homelessness by:

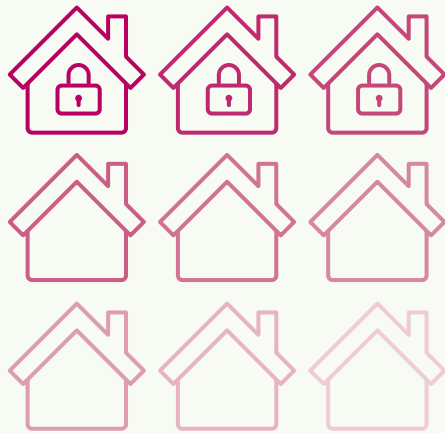
Building a third Foyer

for young vulnerable people



Making sure at least 30%

of our lettings go to homeless households



And working collaboratively with others to deliver Housing First projects.



Embed a new 'Clean, Green and Safe' Environmental Standard for all our estates.

Prioritise our Building Safety Programme and strive to be an exemplar by achieving Building Safety Charter 'Champion' status.



Invest £56 million and proactively manage our assets so all our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard now and in the future.



Strategic priority two:

Be a caring and visible landlord

By 2024 we will:

Deliver year on year performance improvements on:



Repairs



Rent arrears



Service charge collection



Empty homes



Customer satisfaction



Contact and complaints



Successfully introduce a new independent living model for older people’s housing.



Establish new effective arrangements for the management of our **market rent portfolio, leasehold and home ownership services.**



Achieve the **Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF)** ‘Excellent’ level to make sure that equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of our service provision.



Launch and embed a new **Tenancy Support Programme** to provide better outcomes for customers through more effective **multi-agency interventions** on domestic abuse, mental health, safeguarding, crime on our estates, anti-social behaviour and hate crime.

Develop our Service Deal Offer for customers as a sector leading standard for service excellence by:



Caring services

Delivering **caring and visible services** focused on helping those most in need.



Customer service

Providing customer **service excellence** – right services, right first time, consistently.



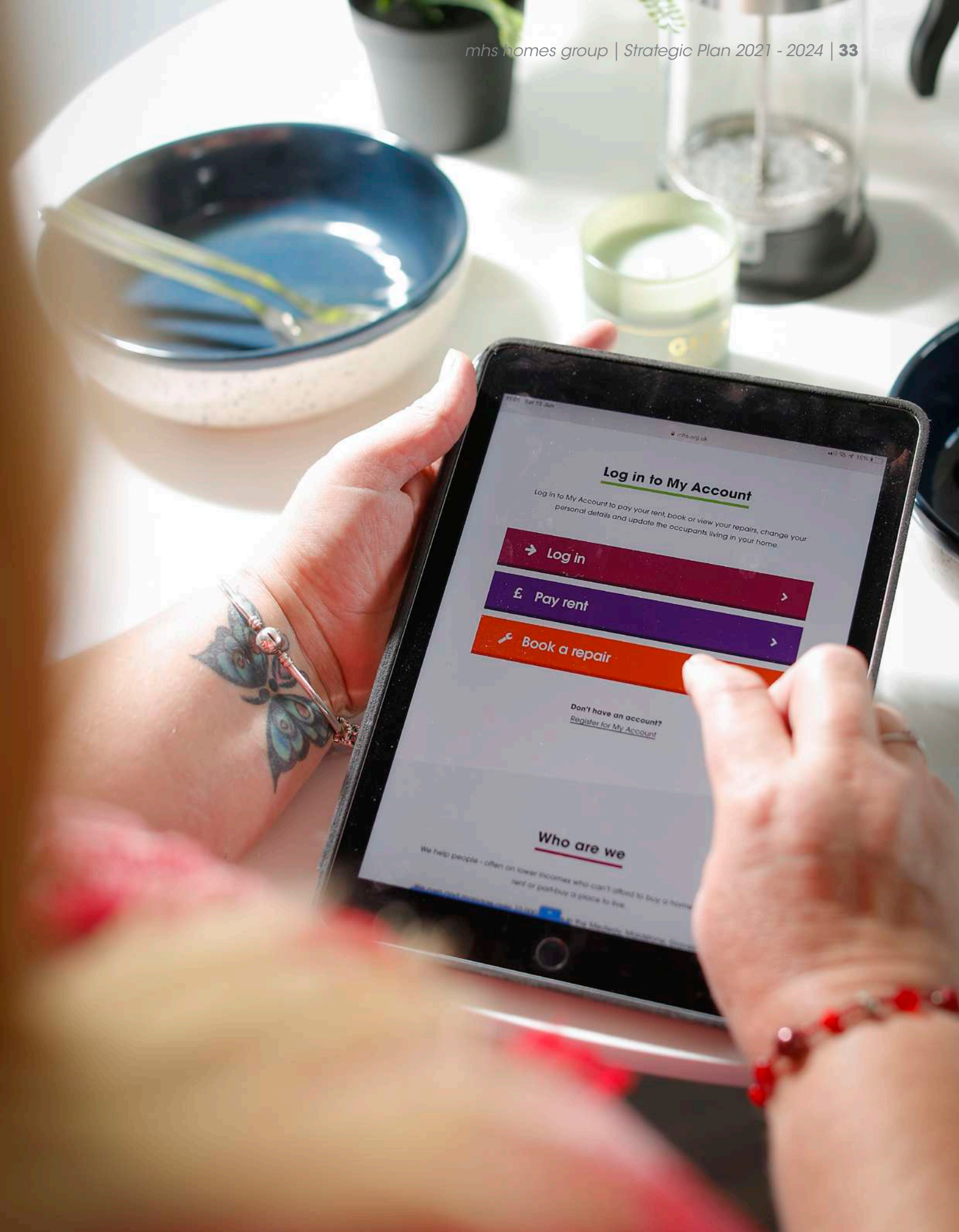
Digital services

Offering **great digital services** that are well used by our customers, including **65%** of customers regularly using **My Account**.



Customer engagement

Engaging with what is most important to our customers and communities through opportunities like **Home Plan Visits** and our **Estate Champions Scheme**.



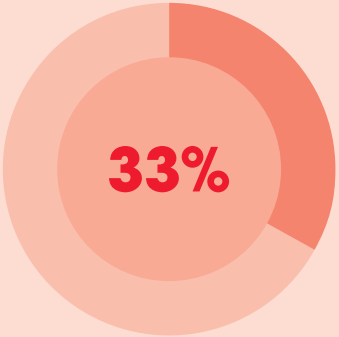
Strategic priority three:

Focus on the customer's voice and community leadership

By 2024 we will:

- Deliver our **Building Safety Programme** around our customers so that they feel safe and informed.
- Create a comprehensive **Estate Champions and Walkabouts Scheme** in partnership with local communities and partners.
- Deliver over **750 #teammhs** volunteer days through A Day for Kent.
- Have in place a **Fuel Poverty Action Plan** to assist customers who are fuel poor.
- Develop, in conjunction with customers, a **Great Environment Plan** focused on community safety, health and wellbeing.
- Make sure all new contracts, in excess of £100,000 contain agreed social value outputs that **directly benefit our local communities**.

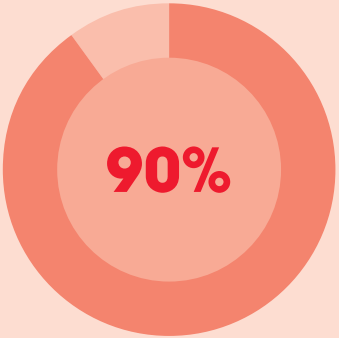
Have a fully embedded Customer Engagement and Empowerment Programme that:



Increases the number and diversity of customers that actively engage with us, including ensuring 33% of customers are invited to participate in a customer involvement activity every year.



Maximises **face-to-face and digital opportunities** for customers to shape and influence our services and to hold the organisation to account.



Makes sure **90% of customers** are satisfied that their views are taken into account.

Improve openness and transparency with customers through:

- Monthly website reporting on customer satisfaction measures
- A new Access to Information Scheme

Strategic priority four:

Have a talented, digitally-enabled and customer focused workforce - #teammhs

By 2024 we will:

Develop our 'Great Place to Work' offer that includes:



Employer of choice rewards package.



Comprehensive Talent Development Programme with a minimum of five days learning and development for every colleague every year.



90% of #teammhs colleagues saying we're a **great employer** that they're proud to work for.



Have an **agile, diverse, engaged, workforce** that makes full use of mobile technology to provide excellent services in customers' homes.



Incorporate the **voice of our customer** into our welcome, induction, training, performance reviews and targets, including every colleague having a customer involvement annual objective so it becomes the responsibility of all.



Be a **We Invest in Wellbeing** 'Gold' and a **We Invest in People** 'Platinum' organisation.



Be an **Accredited Living Wage** employer.



Have in place an innovative **Graduate and Apprentice Scheme** to recruit, develop and retain the next generation of social leaders.



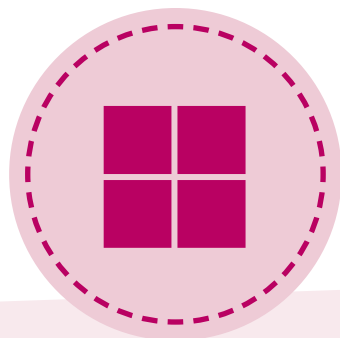
Make sure our growth in the homes we own and manage is matched by increased productivity and effectiveness within existing operating costs.

Strategic priority five:

Have organisational resilience and agility

By 2024 we will:

Harness technology to achieve our ambitions to be a resilient agile organisation by:



Implementing a new **Housing Management System** and rolling out **Microsoft 365**.



Developing opportunities to increase **effectiveness and impact** through Artificial Intelligence, predictive analytics, Smart Homes and Internet of Things and Building Information Modelling.



Have come successfully out of the COVID-19 pandemic a **stronger and more resilient** organisation.



Have in place comprehensive **environment, social and governance impact reporting**.



Have secured new borrowings in **mhs homes and Heart of Medway Housing Association** to deliver our Treasury Strategy and make most effective use of the banking and capital markets.



Complete our **'Reimagining the Future of Work'** project so that we have more inclusive, effective and engaging ways of working.



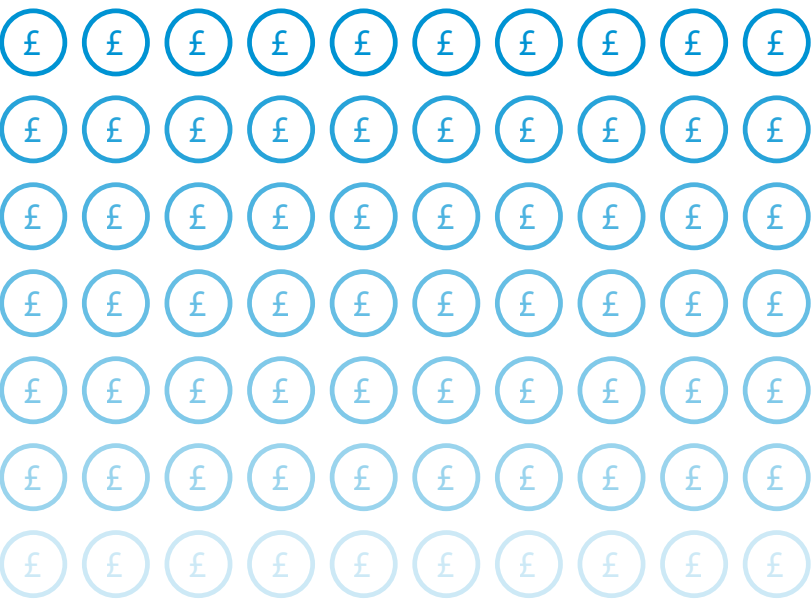
Conduct a governance review and adopt the **RACE Equality Code 2020**.



Deliver a comprehensive **Green Organisation Delivery Plan** to move our offices towards the Future Buildings Standard, improve waste targets, increase green travel and start to transition our fleet towards electric or hydrogen vehicles.

Value for money

For every £70,000 we can save or generate in additional income – we can provide an additional affordable home.



All major investment decisions will be linked to a business case to evidence costs and benefits.

Driving improved value for money will be critical to our success over the next three years.

The better we use the resources available to us, the more we can invest back into social housing.

While we'll grow by 660 new homes over the next three years, we expect to achieve this growth without a corresponding growth in the number of people working for #teammhs.

We'll achieve this through innovation, better use of technology and improved efficiency and productivity.

Over the next three years our value for money targets will include:



Social housing cost per unit per annum being **£3,500 (2023/24)**



Achieving a margin of **44.5%**



Making **£1.2 million** cost and efficiency savings



Making **5% procurement savings** and an increased social value impact

Well governed and financially strong

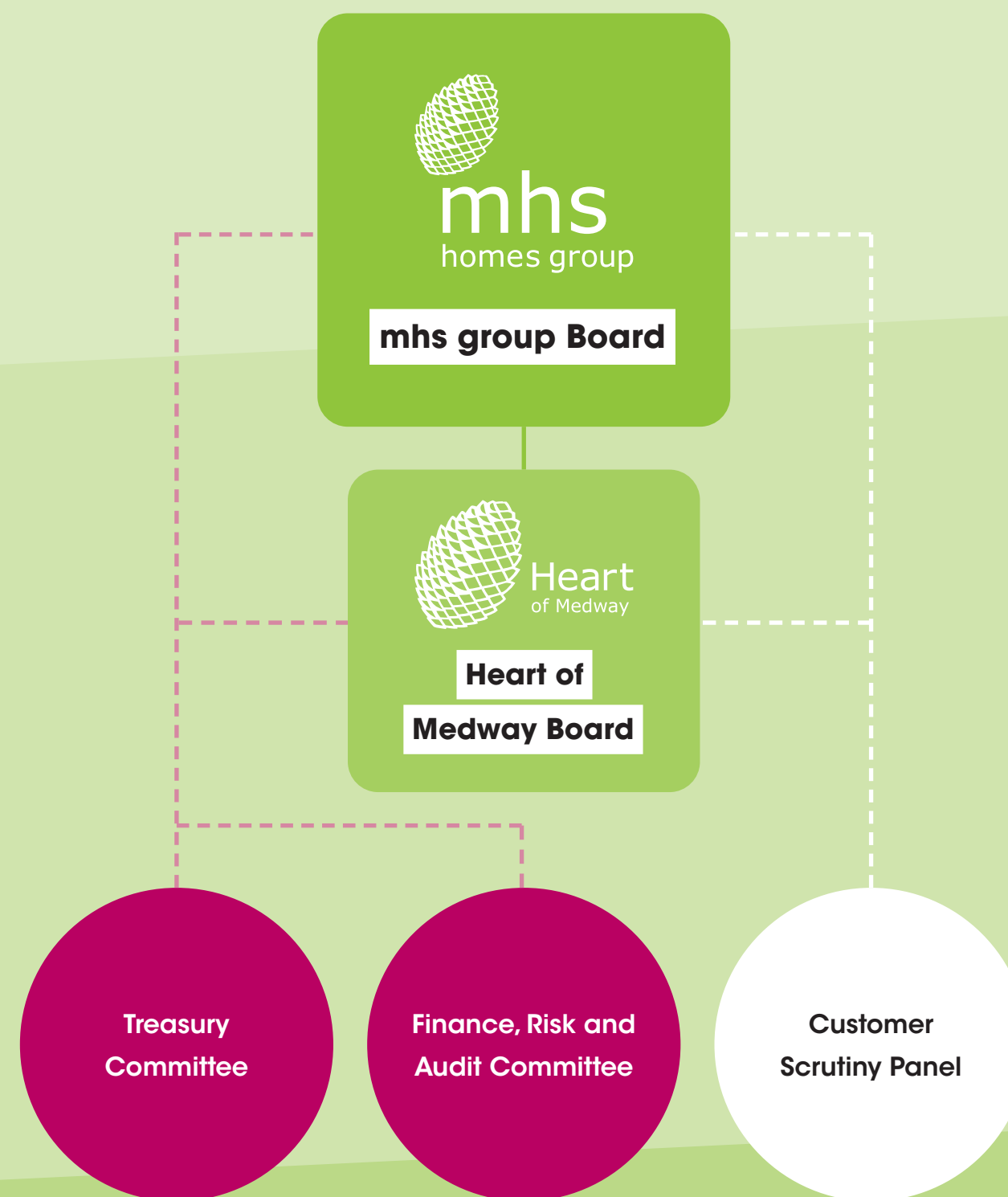
We'll only achieve the ambitions and priorities set out in this Strategic Plan by being well governed and financially strong. Leadership starts in the boardroom and having in place the highest standards of corporate governance.

Our governance structure

The group Board oversees all aspects of the group's activity. Heart of Medway is a subsidiary of the group and has its own Board. The group Board and Heart of Medway Board are supported in their work by the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee and the Treasury Committee.

The Customer Scrutiny Panel is an important part of our governance structure and exists to hold the boards and organisation to account from a customer perspective.

Being well managed and financially strong is critical to our success. As a leading housing charity, having strong financial performance means that we can make greater social impact in relation to our charitable purpose. Our independence is a unique source of our strength and this is recognised by our private Standard & Poors Rating and access to competitive funds from the banking and capital markets.



Get in touch

Thank you for reading our Strategic Plan for 2021-24

To find out more about us, please get in touch:



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