

CORPORATE PLAN 2023-2026



From a position of strength, we will continue to transform our services, expand our business, and deliver value for money

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Over the last few years, the commitment, agility, and imagination of the SW9 team has aided our residents well, as we navigated our way through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The threats and opportunities now facing the social housing sector are considerable. With political and economic instability both at a national and global level, this has resulted in an environment that has seen workforce shortages, inflation, and a cost-of-living crisis. It is for many worrying times.

Against this challenging backdrop, we start the next phase of our Corporate Strategy with positivity, promise and financial strength. Our plans have been developed from consultation with our key stakeholders. The Board is therefore confident that it is focused on the areas that matter most.

We recognise we are not perfect and have some way to go to achieve top quartile performance across our business. However, we are committed to the continued transformation of our business, which will include the embedding of our recent service improvements, increasing agile working arrangements to attract the brightest and best people, the introduction of effective self-service technology through our Digital Inclusion Strategy and greater investment in training and development we provide to ensure our staff are empowered, inspired, and motivated.

We will continue to promote the benefits of resident-led local housing management ensuring this belief continues to underpin and guide our business model. We will look to grow our business by seeking opportunities within the private, public and third sectors. We will partner with other social landlords to increase social housing supply, taking advantage of local management opportunities or stock rationalisation strategies undertaken by other organisations as they arise.

We have a demonstrable track record of supporting our residents through our RISE programme and other initiatives delivered by our many partnering organisations. We see this essential work as a fundamental part of our vision and values.

It is hoped this corporate plan articulates the vision our Board, management, and staff have for the future. We are committed to achieving our targets and objectives by the end of March 2027.



Who we are and what we represent?

SW9 was launched in April 2016; but we have been working at Stockwell Park for much longer. Our journey with the Stockwell Park community began in 2005, when the estate's residents selected Network Housing Group (NHG) as the housing association they wanted their homes to transfer to from Lambeth Council.

In 2007, the ownership of the homes and estate assets were transferred to Community Trust Housing, a subsidiary of NHG. Over 200 transfer promises were made to the residents of Stockwell Park and neighbouring street properties and during the following nine years CTH and NHG worked assiduously to deliver on those promises, investing over £200million in the regeneration and renewal of the estate and street properties including the building of much-needed modern housing of all tenure types.

In 2016, Network Housing Group (NHG) consolidated its group structure to become a single entity organisation, Network Homes. At the same time, it created a new resident-led, locally focused housing management organisation for Stockwell Park to reflect the area's unique history of community leadership. In October 2023, Network Homes merged with Sovereign to form Sovereign Network Group (SNG).

SW9 Community Housing (SW9) was incorporated as a non-asset owning charity; with a resident majority board, with a purpose of providing housing management services to the residents of Stockwell Park and neighbouring street properties. The housing stock and related assets are now owned by the landlord and parent organisation, SNG.

As a resident-led organisation, we are passionate about the community we serve. As enablers we aim to provide a safe and secure environment where our residents are proud to live and call home. Whilst our portfolio consists of five tenures: social rented, affordable, temporary rented homes, residential leasehold, and commercial space it is a community with strong roots in making its voice heard and effecting change by collective solidarity and tenacity.

Through the work we do, we help people to maximise their potential, by offering local people in need of housing a place to call home which is the first step towards living with dignity and increasing quality of life prospects, all within a thriving, well connected urban environment.



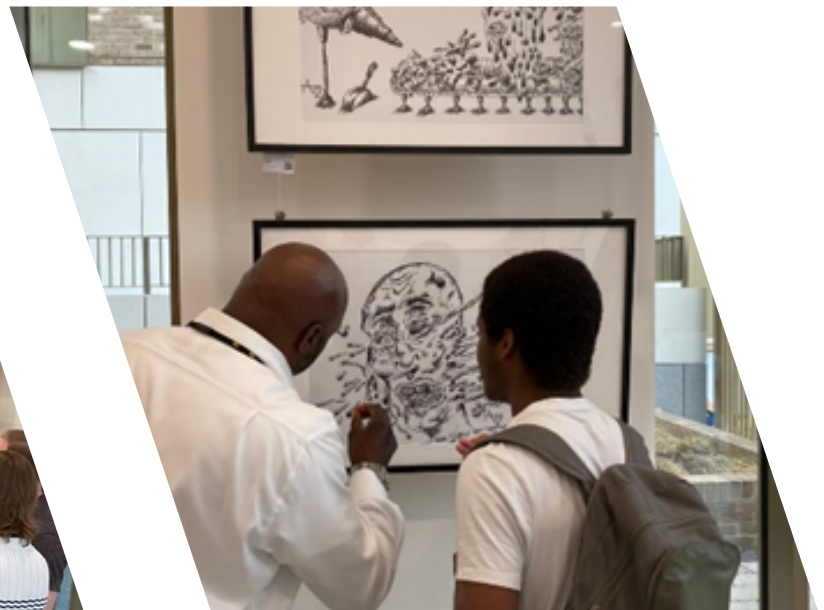


Our values reflect our guiding principles and our beliefs. They underpin and replicate our statement of intent to aspire to be an organisation that is resident focused, driven by social purpose and accountable to the individuals we serve.

Customer Experience – We aim to provide a quality service to our residents and customers, aiming for high standards of service delivered in a fair and open manner. We will be accountable to, and transparent with, our residents, giving a range of opportunities, to provide feedback on their customer experience and overall perception of the services we provide.

Open, Ethical and Transparent – We are open, ethical, and transparent in our decision making. We consult on relevant matters and strive to communicate effectively with our residents, customers, stakeholders, and business partners. The Board and staff will operate in an environment which supports the highest levels of integrity. Our governance will be regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate controls and accountabilities exist across all areas of our business.

Autonomous – We operate as an autonomous socially responsible charitable business that builds on the accomplishments previously achieved by Lambeth Council, Stockwell Park Trust (EMB), Community Trust Housing and Network Homes. We are prepared to take ambitious decisions against appropriate risk management to drive improvements and growth. We will always retain our creative, forward-thinking culture ready to embrace change.



Local – We will retain close local links and support local people and businesses, seeking a broader range of services to meet the needs of our growing, more diverse community. We will aim to make a positive impact within the local community and work collaboratively with others to promote the positive attributes of Brixton.

Financially Prudent – We aim to always deliver our services in an efficient, economic, and effective manner that represents value for money for our residents. We will operate a robust business model that is based on sound business decision-making that recognises both the external and internal environments and can adjust to economic headwinds to ensure any negative impact is minimised on services.

Quality – We try to achieve the highest quality standards possible for our services. We will also demonstrate, deliver, and promote recognised good practice within the resident-led housing sector, continuingly challenging ourselves to improve and be a trailblazer and exemplary organisation.

Equality and Diversity – We celebrate difference and value and respect the individual needs of our residents and customers by treating them fairly and in a non-judgmental way. We treat everyone with compassion and kindness and have a zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory behaviour. We are inclusive and respectful in the way we work embracing the diversity of our residents, staff, and trustees.



Our Corporate Plan focuses on six strategic objectives.

Building on our values are SW9's six strategic objectives. These objectives are a set of aligned aims, delivered through and by our Board, staff and volunteers.

Our objectives reflect the opportunities and threats within the external environment in which we operate and recognise our current internal strengths and weaknesses. We reviewed our strategic direction and objectives at a governance level in the autumn of 2021. The next three-year phase will focus on our core housing management service, improving the quality of services that we deliver and demonstrating value for money.

Our corporate objectives ensure there is consistency between team and individual objectives, with an agreed outcome which can be incrementally measured to track progress during the life of this corporate plan. All our objectives and priorities, together with the outcome we expect to achieve, feed into each of the six strategic objectives which are outlined as follows:

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Strategic Objective 1:

Our Services (Customer Service Excellence) – since customer satisfaction is the best measure of a service, we aspire to be the best resident-led social housing management organisation we can be, delivering a high standard of service, resourcing our activities well and meeting all statutory and regulatory requirements including the Consumer Standards.

Over the life of the plan, we will make measurable and consistent improvements to the services our residents receive by mapping the customer journey, evaluating the feedback, and implementing recommendations. We will proactively pursue ways to increase our knowledge and understanding of our customers' wants, needs and aspirations; by doing so, we will be better placed to deliver on our overall business objectives and drive-up customer satisfaction.

Outcome: We will know we have achieved this:

- through consistent high levels of customer satisfaction
- strong Key Performance Indicator results
- positive engagement with our parent organisation, Network Homes
- all staff to have completed customer training and annual refreshers
- one recognised Customer Service accreditation. (Customer Service Excellence - CSE)
- increased investment and use of CRM and Data systems which help us know our customers better
- introduction of digital solutions that enable customers to self-serve
- reduced number of disrepair and legal cases brought against SW9's CSE Accreditation



Strategic Objective 2:

Our Homes (Great Homes & Place) – the management of the assets under management includes a variety of complex activities that go beyond simple investment in property maintenance. While always recognising these assets are primarily, peoples' homes, we will look to maximise value for money and manage the competing financial and social objectives. We will maintain all the homes and related community assets appropriately by basing our strategic and operational plans on the best available data and analysis; we will manage expenditure appropriately to ensure disrepair and legal action taken against us is minimised, thereby reducing unbudgeted compensation and legal expenditure. We will work with Network Homes to develop costed strategies, understanding the present and future costs of maintaining the assets including capital investment and or disposals, ensuring decisions about timing of capital investments are clear and transparent for our residents.

Outcome: We will know we are delivering on this objective or achieved it when:

- an agreed pathway with Network Homes to Net Zero is in place
- completed consultation with residents on new retro fitting and heating methods
- consistently delivering a proactive responsive repairs service with upper quartile performance
- completion of the regeneration of the estate and neighboring street properties
- fulfilling all Building and Fire Safety obligations
- an agreed 5-year planned, and cyclical stock reinvestment strategy and cost model is in place

Strategic Objective 3:

Our Business (Business Viability and Assurance) – This means being a well-run organisation. Being agile, resilient, and forward-thinking. We will actively pursue business opportunities that align with our values, social purpose and increase our financial strength to greater affect our ability to increase our area of benefit and corporate objectives.

Outcome: We will know we have achieved this by:

- maintained financial strength
- annual net surpluses of 10% of income after Network Homes annual recharge
- ensuring our treasury management strategies support our current and future ambitions
- meeting our regulatory, statutory, and legislative responsibilities
- embedded compliance and assurance
- defined risk appetite and risk mitigation strategies
- compliance with NHF Code of Governance

Strategic Objective 4:

Our People (Employer of Choice) – SW9 showed great resilience and ingenuity during the pandemic. Overnight the organisation went from being estate/office based to embracing homeworking, with only our key workers and estate staff remaining onsite. The transformation to a hybrid and more agile way of working is still work in progress. We want to be a progressive employer that can attract the best, offering competitive salaries and great benefits to aid employee retention.

Outcome: We will know we have achieved this when:

- employee satisfaction levels exceed 85%
- the reliance of agency staff falls below 5% of the establishment
- a well-developed and embedded People and Culture strategy that empowers staff to deliver the best possible customer service
- all staff to have completed Equality and Diversity training
- competitive terms and conditions
- staff wellbeing support and interventions are best in class
- increased staff retention and clear paths for progression
- recognised external validation e.g., Investors in People

Strategic Objective 5:

Our Community (Participation and Scrutiny) – This means working collaboratively with our residents in the design, delivery and improvement of our services and moving from consultation to co-creation.

Outcome: We will know that we have achieved this by:

- increased and sustained resident feedback
- service users being happy with the services we provide
- established levels and methods to participate
- demonstrable increase in the profile of our organisation within the community and amongst our business partners and stakeholders.
- increased community investment which expands the scope of services in support of our vulnerable residents
- attained Resident Participation accreditation e.g., TPAS

Strategic Objective 6:

Our Social Purpose) Partnership Working - This means working collaboratively with local and national partners. Maintaining our Signpost framework agreements with third parties and stakeholders to maximise our impact an increased reach for the benefit of existing and future residents.

Outcome: We will know this has been achieved through:

- an increased awareness and willingness to partnership opportunities,
- access to new funding streams
- increase in community projects and initiatives
- being externally recognised as an exemplar partner for housing plus and social impact
- nominated for a minimum of one award for partnership working



Back in the late 1960's Stockwell Park was originally created as an example of modern living and won numerous rewards for its multi-level design. Some 30 years later it was considered poor design, and many attribute this to the rise in anti-social behaviour and being given the title of a failing estate. Whilst 24% of the original estate has been demolished in recent years and replaced with new homes, the retained original blocks have been refurbished to a high standard. Feedback from our residents suggests significant numbers like the original design of their homes, all were built to Parker Morris space standards, with good storage and a disproportionate number as family-sized dwellings, all with generous private outdoor space.

Since 2007, the inward investment of more than £200million has transformed the homes and shared spaces of Stockwell Park and neighbouring streets. The diversification of tenure types has added to the sustainability of the community and attracted new homeowners to choose what once was labelled a "sink estate" into somewhere people want to call home. Many new homeowners have seen their property values more than double since the first outright sale home was sold in 2010. The surplus from build to sell homes generated £xx million towards the investment into new homes for social rent and refurbishment of existing homes.

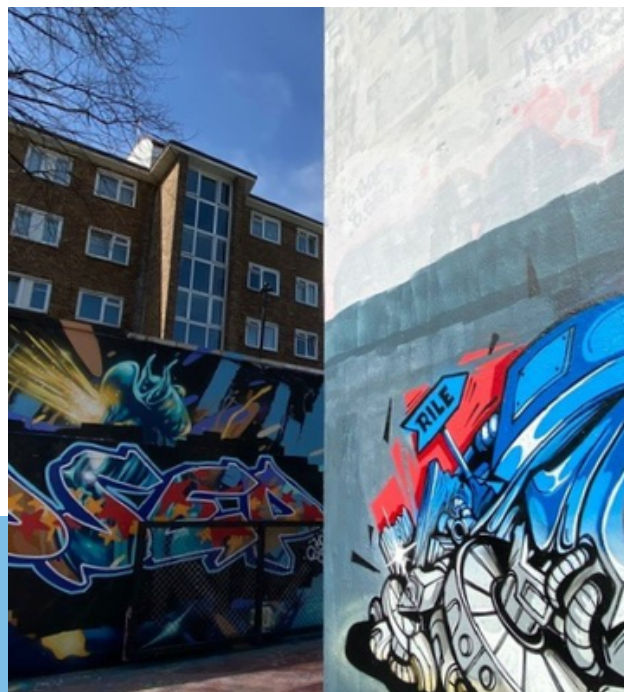


SW9 Community Housing in numbers

The total number of properties we manage is 1,779.
This is made up of:



An additional 38 homes are currently in development and will be added to the portfolio in 2024. This development is an affordable mixed tenure scheme providing much needed general rented and Shared ownership homes. It's not only homes that we manage. SW9 Community Housing maintains other assets that contribute to the public realm – a duck pond, graffiti pen and numerous play areas. These facilities are hidden treasures within the estate but have a far-reaching interest from others living outside of the estate.



SW9 Community Housing provides management and support services to a wide range of people. We are extremely proud of the diversity of this community and our ability to consistently meet the needs of people from different backgrounds, of different ages and with different needs, aspirations, and expectations. Because SW9 Community Housing is a single estate entity with some neighbouring street properties, we have the advantage of being able to get to know more of our residents and build relationships with them.



While at SW9 Community Housing, our objectives are outward facing, we believe to achieve them we need to continue to focus internally and transform the organisation to drive better customer satisfaction, value for money and performance through motivated and engaged colleagues. To ensure we can deliver our plans, we need to constantly invest in our people, processes, and technology because success depends on having an engaged workforce with the skills, knowledge, and tools to do the job, and the motivation to strive for high performance and continuous improvement. We do believe that our people are our most important asset, and we are proud that our team is as diverse as our residents.

We recognise the vital importance of strong and visionary leadership from the Board and senior management to develop our staff to be the best they can be. The culture of the organisation is set by the leadership. We will invest in developing the leadership capacity of our Board, Executive and Management teams. In addition to our corporate training programme, each member of staff will have their own development plan which will be designed to equip all our staff with the skills the business needs.

We will continue to strengthen our governance arrangements to ensure the continuing effectiveness of our Board and Committees. Over the coming three years, 65% of our board will step down having completed their 9-year term. Our focus on succession planning has already begun and the success of our objectives over the coming years will partly be dependent on our success in attracting and training our future Trustees.

With an increased focus on health and wellbeing, we need all our colleagues to be well, both mentally and physically. We will invest a further sum of money to support and engage our staff by introducing a range of recurring and one-off events to promote health and wellbeing.

The average age of a SW9 Community Housing employee is 40, with 57% of our staff team identify as female. The diverse racial and ethnic breakdown of the team also reflects the ethnic diversity of our residents.



Our Challenges Ahead

The Covid-19 pandemic promises to make permanent changes to the way we work, provide services, and interact with customers. Since the end of the pandemic most of our staff have been performing their duties in an agile way by spending up to 50% of their time working from home and accessing our systems remotely. We expect staff will want to retain workplace flexibility and we do not know yet whether these trends will last the test of time, so our arrangements will need to be adaptable as events unfold.

We can only see resident expectation rise; the majority will eventually prefer the speed and convenience new technology offers, against an in-person experience that can take more time and reduces their flexibility to engage the service at a time of their choosing. Residents no longer just compare our service levels and their customer experiences with other housing providers, but against mainstream disrupter businesses, like Amazon, Uber, Ocado, Screwfix or more traditional retailers like John Lewis who have revolutionised their business model.

So, in addition to getting things “right first time” and “doing what we say we will”, our residents are increasingly expecting us to keep their homes and the estate in great condition without their oversight and input. Calls for their involvement must be more sparing, respecting the many competing demands on their free time, whilst recognising resident involvement is shifting to a landlord/tenant relationship based across multi-media, interacting using their channels of choice on issues and at time that suits them. It is often the case their ambitions are not equally met because of the lack of technological investment and advancement by smaller housing organisations like us, partly as due to resources and other demands.

The realization that our sector has been one of the slowest to move to a self-service model has impacted on the sector's ability to deliver the consistency of service and financial operational efficiencies businesses expect due to a result of automation. There will always be an expectation from older and vulnerable residents to retain face to face involvement, which an organisation such as SW9 will always make available as part of our business model.

Our Challenges Ahead

The ability to collect 100% of the rent and service charges due is becoming increasingly difficult. Since the pandemic our income collection rates have reduced from a consistent year end 101% down to 95%. Our contractual arrangement with Network Homes stipulates a guaranteed percentage of rental income is paid to them based on the rent due, not collected. The current downturn in income collection performance is likely to continue for the foreseeable future due in part to the Cost-of-Living crisis, high inflation, the global economic slowdown and sustained high energy prices. All these factors are weighing heavily on so many of our residents. As the number of residents on Universal Credit continues to rise, many of these tenants will fall into rent arrears, and our dedicated Income team will continue to work closely with those residents to navigate the system to find solutions to the causes of the rent arrears.

As a social housing management agent, with delegated responsibilities from a regulated provider it is our first responsibility to keep our residents safe. The context of Grenfell Tower remains central in terms of the physical safety of homes and in our relationship with residents. The Building Safety Bill, the Fire Safety Act and the Consumer Regulations published by the Regulator for Social Housing bring significant additional responsibilities for Registered Providers, which ultimately means additional financial expenditure is necessary. Whilst we acknowledge SW9 Community Housing is not regulated, its parent organisation is, and therefore substantial obligations fall upon SW9 as per the conditions within the Management Agreement with Network Homes.

The Government has set a target of becoming Zero Carbon by 2050 and for Registered Providers to achieve an Energy Performance rating of C by 2030. Achieving the challenge of decarbonisation and continuing to invest in the upkeep of the portfolio is another, currently un-costed burden on the sector. We do see decarbonisation as saving the planet and tackling fuel poverty, but unless new technologies are developed to meet this target our older buildings will fall short and ultimately residents will not share the benefits newer properties residents will experience.



Our Challenges Ahead

In times of uncertainty and economic challenges, it is not unusual for Anti-Social-Behaviour (ASB) to increase. Reported instances of ASB have risen and will inevitably continue to increase. Rough sleeping and homelessness and the levels of ASB linked to this issue are the main concerns identified. We are committed to continually reviewing our effectiveness in dealing with ASB against our published service standards, evaluating the quality of communication with victims whilst allegations are investigated.

We understand that efficient procurement and the management of contracts is essential to ensure improved performance, and increased satisfaction. Over the period of this plan, it is essential we manage contractors and consultants' performances by ensuring staff have the appropriate skills and training to provide effective contract management. As a client it is essential that we prepare comprehensive briefs and specifications and hold those we appoint to deliver on our behalf to account.

It has never been more important to ensure that we are providing and receiving value for money. It is critical the services we provide are "best in class" and that every pound spent can be accounted for and has added value. As a small organisation SW9 Community Housing doesn't always benefit from the economies of scale of larger organisations. Nevertheless, we are committed to ensuring our costs per unit are within the median range of similar sized social housing providers.

As a business with a social purpose, we will always seek to exploit opportunities with our contractors to commit to adding social value to any contract award. In times of economic challenge, social value is usually one of the first casualties as contractors try to maintain their profit margins. We will continue to work with our contractors and measure social value outcomes, holding our contractors to the commitments and obligations made as part of any tender submission.

