

Sustainable and Cohesive Communities	<b>Strategy</b>
<b>Approved by</b> Chief Executive	<b>Issue number 08</b>
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Aims and Objectives</b>
1.1	Hightown Housing Association (Hightown) recognises that it has an important role to play in the quality of life of our residents and service users; and to the wider community and neighbourhoods in which it works. Hightown is a member of the PlaceShapers group of Housing Associations, which recognises the importance of local focus and accountability, and of working with others to improve and shape places where people live.
1.2	Hightown aims to play its part in achieving sustainable and cohesive communities in the areas in which it works. Examples include: sustainable development, energy efficiency and asset management; resident involvement, estate management, allocation of homes, tenancy support, community development, preventing and dealing with anti social behaviour, and social and financial inclusion initiatives.
1.3	Hightown works in partnership and co-operation with residents, local other local landlords and other stakeholders to promote sustainable communities and tackle community issues.
1.4	Hightown is committed to addressing anti-social behaviour and works closely with external agencies and local authority partners to address these issues, and is a member of Resolve ASB.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Definitions and Scope</b>
2.1	A Government definition of sustainable communities is: ‘Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.’ This strategy applies to Development, Tenant Services, Home Ownership, Asset Management, and Care and Supported Housing staff.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Strategy</b>

3.1	<b><u>Development, energy efficiency and asset management</u></b>
3.1.1	Hightown recognises that mixed tenure estates (e.g. rented, shared ownership, and outright home ownership) can contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods. Hightown's new developments will usually be a mix of tenures contributing to the development of mixed communities. The Development Strategy sets this out in more detail.
3.1.2	In line with the Development Strategy, in planning development projects Hightown will aim to consider a range of issues that contribute to the sustainability of the project. This would include, for example, the sustainability of the project location in relation to transport, shops, schools, community facilities, etc.; the mix of tenure and size of homes; density; the quality of the design; secure by design, landscaping and environmental issues; transport and parking; communal and play space; the ability to make best use of brown field, vacant and derelict sites; materials used and energy saving measures.
3.1.3	Hightown will consider aspects of the design and construction of the homes with the aim of incorporating sustainable design principles and encouraging contractors to embrace sustainability. Hightown wants developments that make a positive contribution to environmental sustainability, achieve standards that support long term maintenance and management at a reasonable cost, and become well designed safe neighbourhoods promoting strong communities.
3.1.4	Energy performance is a core component of building sustainability. Hightown's approach is first to ensure high levels of fabric efficiency ("Fabric First"); where renewables are also required, Hightown prefers technologies which deliver reliable and established benefits, particularly for residents, such as solar panels for electricity and hot water.
3.1.5	<p>The Sustainability Strategy sets out the following recommendations aimed at reducing the carbon emissions from Hightown's housing stock and Hightown's operational activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hightown should maintain a Fabric First approach to its investment in new developments and its existing stock so as to deliver year on year improvements in average energy efficiency ratings</li> <li>• Because of the high cost of electricity compared with gas, Hightown should wait before committing to electric heating systems for new and existing properties while the possibilities of hydrogen as a feasible replacement for gas are evaluated.</li> <li>• Hightown should review all operational activities within its direct control to seek out ways of reducing its carbon emissions</li> <li>• Hightown should consider ways in which it might 'offset' carbon emissions through generating renewable energy, planting trees etc.</li> </ul>
3.1.6	Local Lettings Plans are agreed with local authorities for some new developments in order to promote a diverse and cohesive community.
3.1.7	Hightown's Land and Asset Management Group examines matters on existing schemes such as demand, property condition and its long-term viability and consider options such as change of use; reconfiguration and refurbishment of schemes, or disposal, making recommendations to the Board where appropriate.
3.1.8	Hightown will include energy efficiency works, such as boiler, heating and window replacements and insulation works in annual works programmes where this is within

	<p>available budgets and represents value for money. This will help to provide affordable warmth for residents. Hightown is committed to improving the energy ratings of its existing homes and over time aims to achieve homes with a minimum EPC rating of B.</p>
<p><b>3.2</b></p>	<p><b><u>Communities and Community Cohesion</u></b></p>
<p>3.2.1</p>	<p>The Local Government Association defines cohesive communities as places that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offer a common vision and a sense of belonging for all</li> <li>• positively value diversity</li> <li>• provide equal opportunities to people from different backgrounds and</li> <li>• Provide an environment where strong and positive relationships can be developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.</li> </ul>
<p>3.2.2</p>	<p>Hightown works in a variety of ways to help develop a sense of community on its estates and these will continue and be developed further. The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel receives a quarterly report on community development and resident involvement initiatives.</p>
<p><b>3.3</b></p>	<p><b><u>Resident involvement</u></b></p>
<p>3.3.1</p>	<p>Hightown has a Resident Involvement Strategy and a C&amp;SH Service User Involvement Strategy which promote increased resident and service user participation in decision-making and scrutiny of services.</p>
<p>3.3.2</p>	<p>Continues to develop the range of opportunities for residents to get involved and publicises these.</p>
<p>3.3.3</p>	<p>Encourages and supports Residents Associations.</p>
<p>3.3.4</p>	<p>Holds regular Resident Voice and Scrutiny Panel meetings enabling residents to review and scrutinise performance, give feedback and develop local arrangements to meet standards set by the Regulator.</p>
<p>3.3.5</p>	<p>Promotes training for involved residents.</p>
<p>3.3.6</p>	<p>Offers practical resources to support involvement, including access to computers, meeting space, printing and copying at Hightown House</p>
<p><b>3.4</b></p>	<p><b><u>Raising Standards through high quality housing management</u></b></p>
<p>3.4.1</p>	<p>Hightown maintains good standards on estates so that people can take pride in the environment in which they live and feel safe.</p>
<p>3.4.2</p>	<p>Involves residents in setting and monitoring standards through the Neighbourhood Management Policy and agreeing Hightown's Local Arrangements.</p>
<p>3.4.3</p>	<p>Prevents and tackles cases of antisocial behaviour and harassment.</p>
<p>3.4.4</p>	<p>Encourages residents to take part in Estate Inspections where they live so that they can feedback on standards and services delivered.</p>

<p><b>3.5</b></p>	<p><b><u>Tenancy support and community development / social inclusion</u></b></p>
<p>3.5.1</p>	<p>Hightown: Offers support and services to vulnerable residents to help them to sustain their tenancy and assist them to make a positive contribution to society.</p>
<p>3.5.2</p>	<p>Works with other agencies to promote youth diversionary activities.</p>
<p>3.5.3</p>	<p>Works with other agencies to support adult learning opportunities.</p>
<p>3.5.4</p>	<p>Supports and encourages balanced diverse communities, creating mixed neighbourhoods and promotes equality and diversity.</p>
<p>3.5.5</p>	<p>Holds community events on estates and encourages social activities, promoting intergenerational activities.</p>
<p>3.5.6</p>	<p>Aims to achieve the 'Homes For Cathy' commitments that help to address homelessness.</p>
<p><b>3.6</b></p>	<p><b><u>Allocation of homes</u></b></p>
<p>3.6.1</p>	<p>Hightown: Agrees local lettings policies where appropriate.</p>
<p>3.6.2</p>	<p>Takes part in choice based lettings schemes to improve choice and avoid segregation</p>
<p><b>3.7</b></p>	<p><b><u>Financial inclusion</u></b></p>
<p>3.7.1</p>	<p>Hightown's charitable objective is to provide homes to people who have low-income levels and who cannot afford to buy their own home or rent property at market level rents.</p>
<p>3.7.2</p>	<p>Hightown aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide affordable rents and service charges</li> <li>• Provide links to other agencies who can offer advice and support</li> <li>• Maximise benefit entitlement</li> <li>• Assist those in financial difficulty to access relevant grants and funds that help to sustain their tenancy</li> <li>• Assist those who are at risk of losing their tenancy for non-financial reasons by working with them to address breaches of tenancy in order to sustain their tenancy.</li> <li>• Publicise the availability of affordable home contents insurance</li> <li>• Provide floating support to assist in sustaining someone in their home</li> <li>• Take part in projects that aim to help residents improve their financial circumstances</li> <li>• Avoid the need for evictions, which are pursued as a last resort.</li> </ul>
<p>3.7.3</p>	<p>For more detailed information see Hightown's Financial Inclusion Policy.</p>