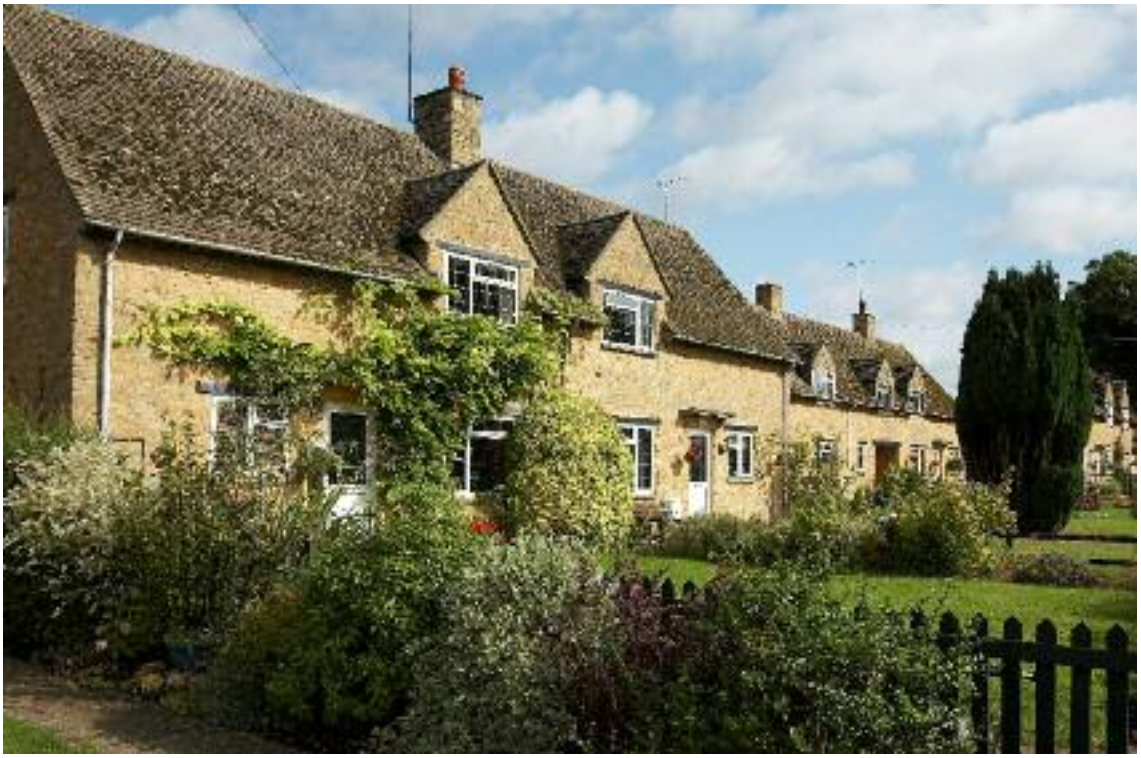
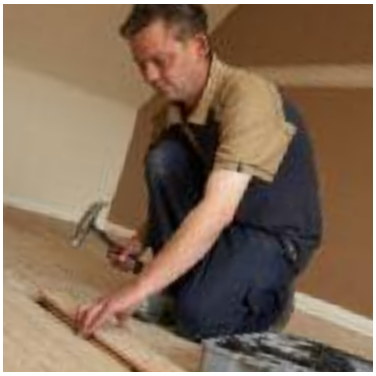
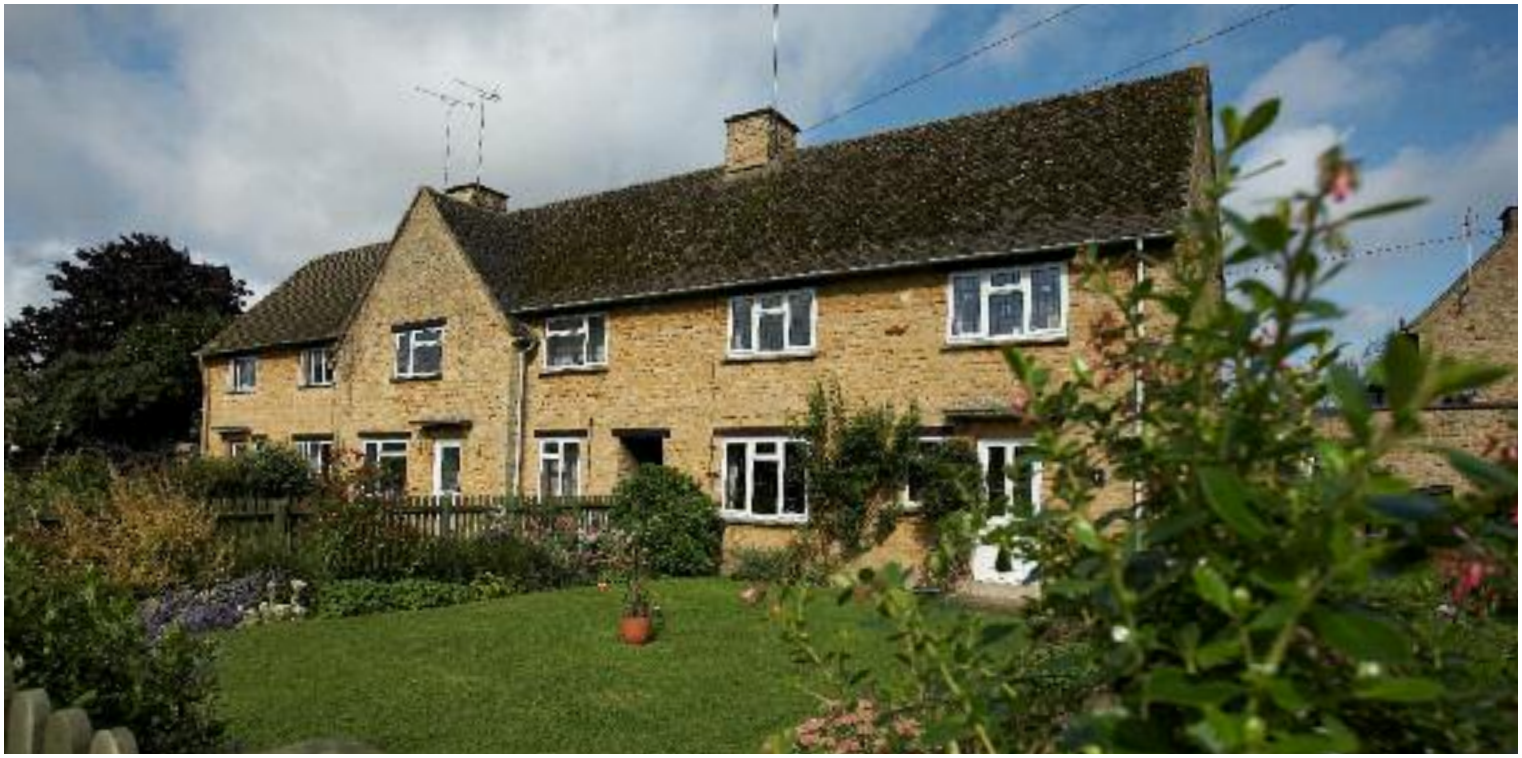


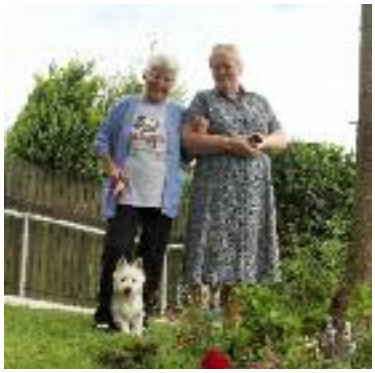


Delivering our promises

South Northants Homes
Annual Report 2008/09

South
Northants
Homes





> We feel very proud that SNH has noticed what was needed and carried it through
>
> *- SNH resident*

Contents

Foreword by Chair

I am delighted to write the foreword for South Northants Homes (SNH) Annual Report after our first full year of operations, showing our progress to date, telling you about our financial position and detailing our performance in meeting the promises in the Offer Document. Setting up a new organisation is never easy and it has been a steep learning curve for the Board.

It has been an exciting and fulfilling year in which the Board is pleased to have seen the promises to date exceeded. It has also been a year of challenge with a significant downturn in the UK economy and the phrase 'credit crunch' now sadly familiar to us all. However, I am very happy to tell you that SNH's financial position remains very strong, and that the organisation has outperformed the business plan.

We are also delighted to have secured our own home at our newly refurbished offices at Wood Burcote House in Towcester, which also meets one of our commitments in the Offer Document.

In the last year we have achieved:

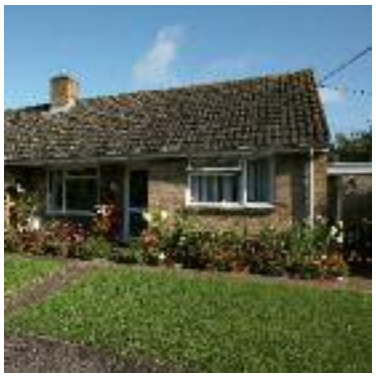
- 412 new kitchens
- 377 new bathrooms
- 413 electric upgrades
- 400 roof/guttering/fascia and soffit upgrades
- handypersons service introduced
- £440,000 spent on adaptations for the elderly and disabled
- service improvements in repairs, housing management and sheltered housing services.

Putting tenants at the heart of our organisation remains a key focus for the Board. We have successfully launched our Customer Committee, a Leaseholder's Forum, and continued to support our existing Housing, Repairs Improvement and Older Persons Forums. A variety of open days, road shows, and regular estate walkabouts are in place. Also a major consultation exercise about the repairs service was completed this year to reshape our service. The Board and I are very grateful for all the efforts of tenants who have sought to get involved in shaping our services to you.

Looking forward, we hope to build on our partnerships with South Northants Council, the police, health authority, Social Services, and Supporting People at a County level to enhance our services and deliver added value to the investment in our homes.

Yours sincerely

Graham Smith
Chair, South Northants Homes



An action packed first year

South Northants Homes came into existence on 17 March 2008 as part of Grand Union Housing Group (GUHG), to take over the ownership and management of 2,890 homes from South Northants Council (SNC).

We are committed and contracted to delivering a series of promises originally made by SNC to their tenants. Our Board are determined to deliver these promises in full, but also to make SNH a totally tenant-focused organisation that delivers quality services and makes a difference in the communities we serve.

Our aim was to 'hit the ground running'. We installed entirely new IT systems and a new Schedule of Rates, but successfully achieved a smooth transition for customers reporting repairs, paying rents and letting homes from day one.

Staff transferring from SNC, apart from Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) staff, moved over to GUHG terms and conditions and recruitment to vacant posts began immediately. By the autumn we had achieved a virtually full establishment.

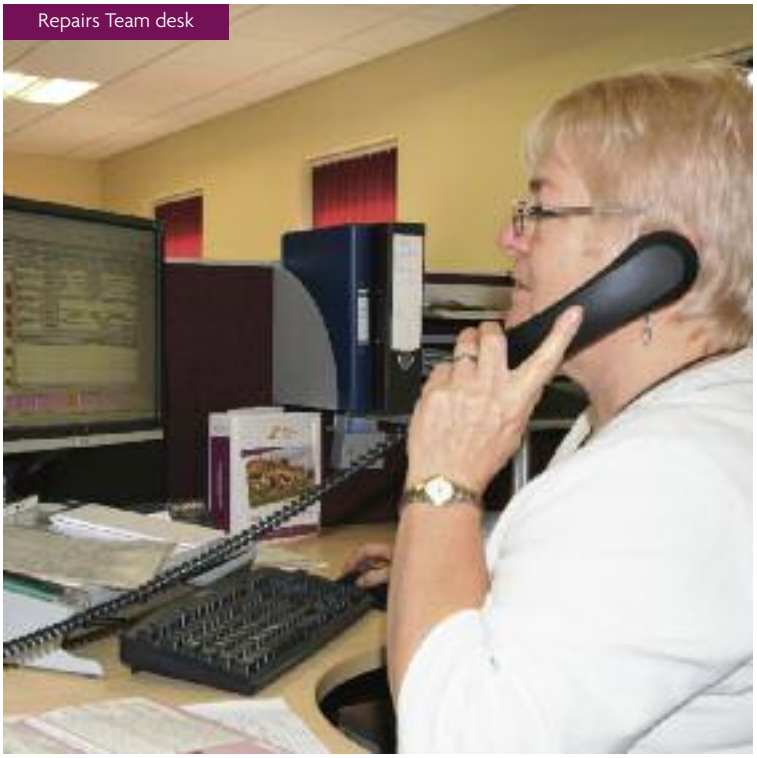
We then set about the task of engaging with our customers, developing governance, creating a performance management framework, securing experienced value-for-money partners to undertake our investment programme and beginning the search for a new home.

In addition, prior to the transfer date, the Shadow Board had identified two key priorities following reviews of key services by consultants. The in-house repairs team, while achieving good levels of tenant satisfaction, was judged to have considerable weaknesses in performance and was very expensive. To address this, a two-year action plan was agreed by the Board, which also formed part of the Housing Corporation's registration approval. A review of warden services had indicated weaknesses in the provision of Supporting People services (a level 'D' assessment), poor management, poor morale and poor practices. A 12-month action plan to achieve level 'B' status and transform the services was agreed.

The following promises have now been delivered:

- over 400 internal modernisations: new kitchens, bathrooms and electrical upgrades
- 403 roof upgrades (new soffit/guttering – 20 re-roofed)
- £440k adaptations for the elderly and disabled such as stair lifts, level access showers, ramps and grab rails
- environmental improvements at Milton Malsor and Greatworth provided over 30 new parking spaces
- new methods of paying rent through Payzone, with 48 outlets across the district
- new tenancy agreement protecting tenants' rights
- new *Tenants' Handbook* and *Repair Manual*
- introduced a new Tenancy Support Service, which has helped over 130 vulnerable tenants in the first year
- introduced a Community Development Team.


Repairs and Maintenance Team


Repairs Team desk

Engaging with customers

The Board and staff at SNH are very grateful to those tenants who have joined or continued to work with us to shape and monitor our services.

We have a structure of customer forums:

- Repairs and Improvements
- Housing Management
- Older Persons
- Leaseholders
- Equality and Diversity (planned)
- Communications (planned)
- Youth (planned).

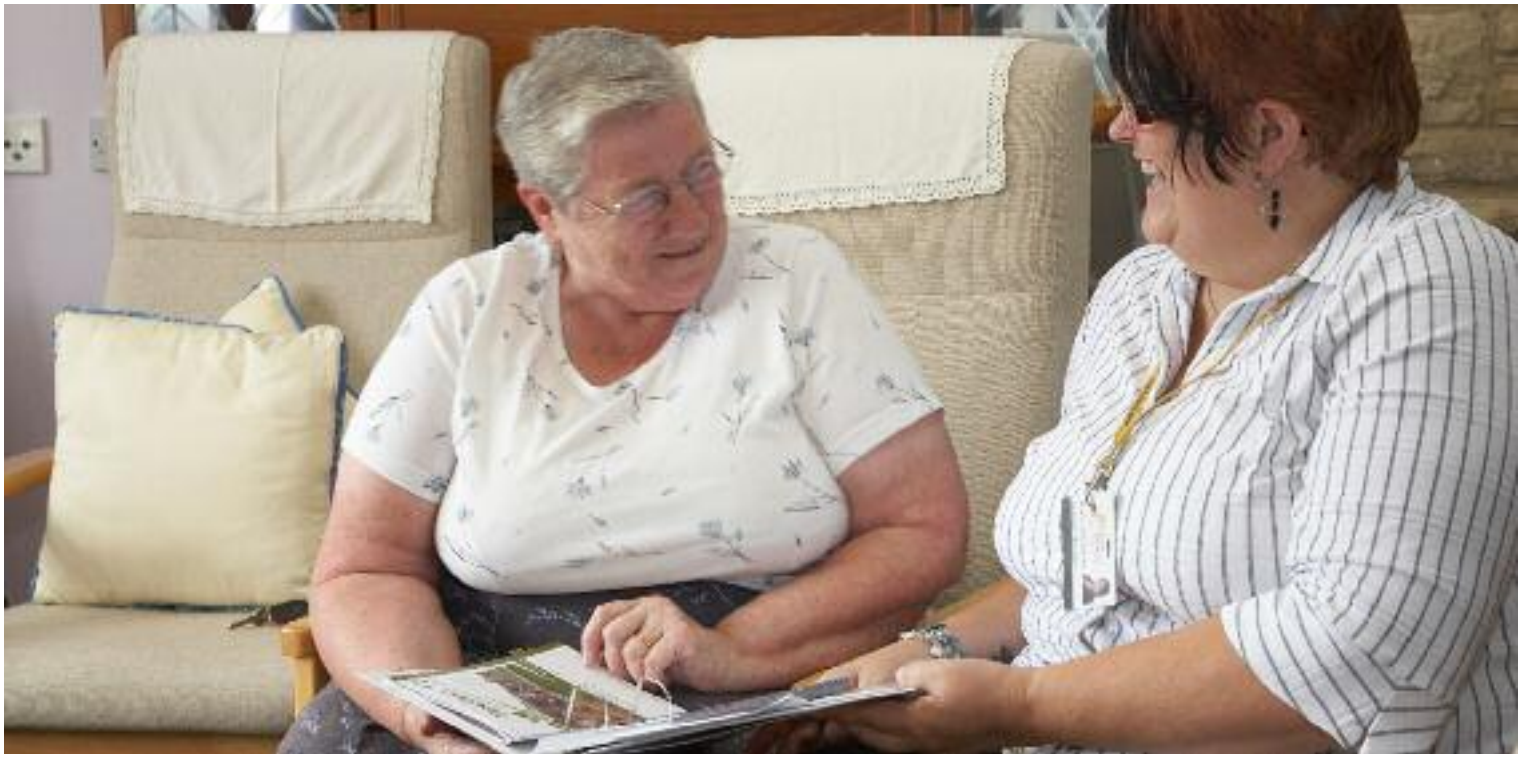
The above-mentioned forums have helped to shape the new *Tenants' Handbook* and *Repairs Manual* and have had input into the tenant newsletters.

Recognising that not all tenants have the desire or capacity to attend formal forums, we have taken our services out to 20 road shows and open days across the district over the last year, of which 300 tenants have attended.

A programme of 'estate walkabouts' was published in our tenant calendar, to which a further 63 tenants have contributed. More than 10 tenants have enquired about becoming 'mystery shoppers' and we plan to develop this over the coming year.

Tenants' training needs are well catered for, with training sessions at forums and supporting tenants at conferences/training events such as those held by the Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS).

We have created a Customer Committee which is a formal sub-committee of the Board. This is a geographically representative framework which monitors performance and



the work of the forums and is the body which elects tenants to the Board. It has met four times now and is growing in style and confidence.

Our forums have helped:

- shape the choices and options for tenants in the improvement package
- select major works contracting partners
- shape the contract and selection of partner for gas servicing
- shape the future of repair design services following wider consultation with all tenants.

We also have tenant representatives on the SNH Board and nominations are made by the Customer Committee. The Board is ultimately responsible for approving the nominations from the Customer Committee. Membership of the Customer Committee is open to all SNH tenants, subject to a process requiring applicants to stand for the position in their own geographical area. We have 10 geographical areas, with one tenant representative from each, one leaseholder, five council nominees and five independent members. Customer Committee members are required to stand down after three years.


Retirement Homes Team

Working in partnership

We recognise that many of the achievements we wish to make for our tenants cannot be done alone, and indeed greater value-for-money can be achieved by working with others.

During our first year, links to other agencies and partners have been forged with:

- Local Strategic Partnership
- Daventry District and South Northants Council Safer Stronger Partnership
- Safe and Sound
- SNC Homelessness Forum
- Supporting People
- Towcester Partnership
- Police
- Health Services
- Social Services
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Northamptonshire Highways Agency
- Local schools.

Our community open days, which were originally undertaken by ourselves, are now organised in partnership with Safe and Sound. This means organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch, Library Services, Voluntary Bureau, Fire Service, Care and Repair and SNC Recycling team come together under the banner of 'Community Connections'.

Our 'Silver Surfers' initiative, which has seen internet access/laptops introduced into our sheltered schemes, has involved an intergenerational scheme with local

South Northants Homes head office

Silver Surfers

New office space has been found and acquired in Towcester, as we promised. The former Connexions training building on a light industrial estate in the heart of Towcester, was finally purchased in April 2009 after protracted negotiations.

This 1980s building will be refurbished to provide good quality reception, office, meeting room and training facilities for our tenants, staff and Board. It has been funded within the existing loan facility and provides another asset to SNH.

schools which culminated in an IT training open day at the school attended by over 50 SNH tenants.

Working with two junior schools we have assisted healthy eating projects by developing some allotments facilities at the schools.

In partnership with the police, we have tackled some anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues, with specific security enhancement to some estates. We have also signed a sharing information protocol and made arrangements with the police and Care and Repair to 'target hardening' measures for victims of burglary. Target hardening provides quick repairs and extra security measures to homes where burglary has taken place and victims remain vulnerable.

The Board have committed additional resources to provide money advice services and to tackle ASB and we are working in partnership with SNC to deliver this in a co-ordinated way. We are also working jointly with SNC to provide village/area based assessments for new social housing provision across the district.

> "Greater value-for-money can be achieved by working with others."

South Northants Homes performance data

Average rent per week	Actual	Target
SNH	£70.23	N/A

Rent collected	Actual	Target
SNH	98.33%	100%

Current tenants' rent arrears	Actual	Target
SNH	1.04%	1%
National average 2008/09	5.08%	

Rent written off	Actual	Target
SNH	0.04%	Less than 0.04%

Amount of former tenant rent arrears collected	Actual	Target
SNH	29.5%	20%

Rent lost due to properties being vacant	Actual	Target
SNH	1.28%	N/A

Dwellings vacant and available to let	Actual	Target
SNH	0.35%	Less than 1.5%
National average	0.8%	

Dwellings vacant and not available to let	Actual
SNH	0.5%
National average	1.0%

Average relet time	Actual	Target
SNH	5.74 wks	3.5 wks
National average	5.74 wks	

South Northants Homes performance data

Average SAP ratings	Actual	Target
SNH	66	63
National average	68	

Properties meeting Decent Homes Standard	Actual	Target
SNH	76%	74%
National average	89%	

Repairs completed within target time		Actual	Target
Emergency	- 4 hours	100%	98%
Emergency	- 24 hours	91.6%	98%
Urgent	- 5 days	90.3%	92%
Routine	- 20 days	99.2%	90%

Number of lettings in the year	
Local authority nominations	105
Homeless	33
Transfers	36
Mobility scheme	0
Total	**174**

Types of homes let	
General needs	
Bedsits	22
1 bedroom properties	27
2 bedroom properties	85
3 bedroom properties	39
4+ bedroom properties	1
Total	**174**

South Northants Homes performance data

How each £1 rent of income is spent	£
Repairs and improvements	0.72
Housing management	0.19
Interest payments	0.09
Total	**1.00**

Number of rented properties at 31 March 2009 by type	
Studio flats	40
Flats	379
Houses and bungalows	2471
Total	**2890**

Number of rented properties at 31 March 2009 by size	
Studio flats	40
1 bed	250
2 bed	1382
3 bed	1133
4+ bed	85
Total	**2890**

Number of improvements completed 2008/09	Actual	Target
Bathrooms	377	230
Kitchens	412	350
New roofs	20	30
Rewires	413	-

Complaints received		2008/09
Total number		109
Upheld on appeal		0
Upheld by Ombudsman		0

Number of unsolicited complaints received		2008/09
SNH		69

South Northants Homes financial information

Income and expenditure for the year ending 31 March	2009 £'000	2008 £'000
Turnover	10,996	553
Operating costs	(13,217)	(419)
Operating surplus/(deficit)	(2,221)	134
Interest receivable	80	4
Interest payable and similar charges	(1,232)	(366)
Other finance income	67	0
Deficit on ordinary activities before taxation	(3,306)	(228)
Taxation	0	0
Deficit for the year	**(3,306)**	**(228)**

Balance sheet as at 31 March	2009 £'000	2008 £'000
Fixed assets		
Housing	28,415	22,100
Other	1,523	175
Total fixed assets	29,938	22,275
Current assets		
Debtors	54,232	70,627
Cash	73	1,401
	54,305	72,028
Creditors falling due in 1 year	(2,531)	(10,918)
Net current assets	51,774	61,110
Total assets	**81,712**	**83,385**
Loans	20,000	17,000
Liabilities	52,772	59,500
Reserves		
Revaluation	12,629	7,113
Revenue	(3,689)	(228)
Total loans and reserves	**81,712**	**83,385**

Note: The summarised accounts above relate to SNH only and are an extract from the association's Financial Statements, which are published separately. If you would like a full copy of the audited accounts, they are available from the Director of Finance on request.

South Northants Homes
Board and Management Team

The Board

David Aaronson
Council representative

Ann Addison
Council representative

Philip Gabel
Tenant representative

Shirley Gough
Tenant representative

Carole Halfacre
Independent

Ian McCord
Council representative

Keith Millican
Independent

Mary-Anne Sergison-Brookez
Council representative

Graham Smith
Chair, Council representative

James Sparrow
Independent

Malcolm Taylor
Tenant representative

Clive Williams
Independent

Management Team

Paul Calland
Managing Director

Doug Grace
Assistant Director
Property Services

Gill Higginson
Assistant Director
Housing Services

Equality and Diversity

South Northants Homes has a responsibility to ensure that equal opportunity and effective management of diversity are at the core of its business. The association sets targets to deliver services that are responsive to the needs of communities and individuals, and promote social inclusion. Further details of this policy and our action plan are available on request.

Do you need this in a different format?

Do you need the information in this document in a different format?
Please contact us on 08454 606888 to discuss your specific requirements.

South Northants Homes

Wood Burcote House, Burcote Road,
Towcester, Northants, NN12 6TF

Tel: 08454 606888
Fax: 08454 607888
Email: housing@southnorthantshomes.co.uk
Web: www.southnorthantshomes.co.uk

business for neighbourhoods

Housing Forum Member CONSTRUCTING EXCELLENCE in the built environment

Registered address: Wood Burcote House, Burcote Road, Towcester, Northamptonshire, NN12 6TF
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Member of the National Housing Federation. South Northants Homes is an exempt charity.