



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024

Hello everyone and the warmest of welcomes to Freebridge Community Housing's Annual Report for tenants.

This year's report will focus and reflect on the 2023/24 financial year, which saw us complete the third part of the five-year strategic plan we have in place and like to refer to as 'Building Better Futures'.

The plan dictates that we must follow key objectives, which are:

TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

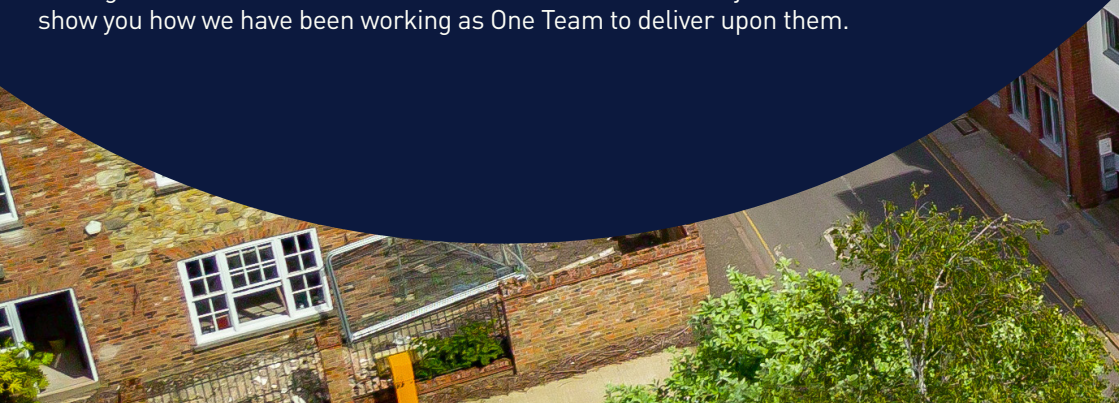
TO CREATE HOMES, COMMUNITIES, AND LOCAL SPACES TO BE PROUD OF

TO OFFER A BALANCED HOUSING MARKET

TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

BEING A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

Throughout this document we will allude to all five of those objectives and show you how we have been working as One Team to deliver upon them.





OUR OUT & ABOUT INITIATIVE

TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE
TO CREATE HOMES, COMMUNITIES, AND
LOCAL SPACES TO BE PROUD OF



Our Out and About programme, which continues to a prominent part of the service we offer our customers, was once again well-supported by Freebridge colleagues in 2023/24.

The initiative, which sees our colleagues speak to hundreds of you in your own homes and communities each year, allows us to get direct feedback from you and allows you to air any concerns you may have directly with us.

The programme, which directly supports two of our key strategic objectives, was tweaked slightly this year as we asked you what one thing you'd change about the service we offer you. Your varied responses were very helpful in allowing us to shape the service we provide for you.

Over the past year, we visited 2,183 of you in your homes and also added two additional dates to our original Out and About schedule.



184
colleagues
involved



2,183
homes visited



1,164
tenants spoken
with



1,003
gained no
access



433
repairs raised



104
Something Not Quite
Right (SNQR) raised



57
tenancy
referrals raised



117
occupant
details updated



140
follow-up calls
made



68
tenancy support
referrals raised

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH TRAVIS PERKINS

TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE



Over the past year we've entered an important working partnership with Travis Perkins Managed Services.

What this means in general is that we have teamed up with Travis Perkins on a materials, waste management, and plant hire partnership.

However, what this means for our customers is that we have been able to implement TPGo Order, combined with a separate new scheduling system and mobile working model.

This provides us with a more streamlined service, allowing us to

work more efficiently and deliver a better service to our customers.

As part of the partnership, we have moved away from using our own stores and are already using a purpose-built and dedicated Fulfilment Centre at Travis Perkins' King's Lynn site.

Dave Seaton, Freebridge's Director of the DLO, said: "Our partnership with Travis Perkins underscores our commitment to delivering excellent customer and colleague service, all while ensuring we demonstrate value for money."

STOCK CONDITION COMPLETION: WHAT COMES NEXT



In 2023/24, our contractor completed all aspects of the monumental task that was our stock condition survey.

This process ensures that we now have a clear costed plan of where to prioritise home investment plans such as insulation and heating upgrades to ensure they are directed to those that need it the most.

We will continue to work to improve EPC ratings across our properties as part of our journey towards 2050 and becoming a carbon neutral business.

That starts with our commitment to improve the EPC rating of all of our homes to a minimum of EPC C by 2026.

TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

THE SUPPORT WE OFFER TO YOU

TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

When it comes to our core purpose at Freebridge it's you, our customers, who are at the very centre.

As has been the norm in recent years, we understand that we are living in difficult times with the cost-of-living crisis still in play and energy prices remaining high despite a recent fall.

This is why we have done our utmost to help our customers via different support funds.

Our General Support Fund can be accessed by all customers and mainly covers support for food and energy vouchers.

The support fund can be accessed by all Income Advisors and Tenancy Support

Advisors following a referral from all colleagues in the business, detailing a crisis point which has left them in a position that they require additional support.

Our Sheltered Support Fund, meanwhile, has been there to help our customers in sheltered schemes with the increased energy costs that are not covered by housing benefit or universal credit.

If an assessment shows that they are in a negative balance based on their essential household bills (excluding food and luxury spending), we topped them up with a payment each month to ensure they have £200 a month for food and to live on.



We provided **£77,634** of support to customers through issuing **1,450** food and energy vouchers (Increase of 9% on 2022/23).



We provided an additional **£11,340** through our sheltered support fund.



That's a total of **£88,974** of support for our customers.



In addition, we provided winter fuel payments totalling **£4,300** to 43 customers in a home with an EPC rating of F or G.

LAUNCH OF THE ACADEMY

TO CREATE HOMES, COMMUNITIES, AND LOCAL SPACES TO BE PROUD OF
BEING A GREAT PLACE TO WORK



At the start of 2024, we launched The Academy based on feedback from our own colleagues.

This all-new part of the organisation offers all of our colleagues a pathway to move up within the Freebridge ranks or simply enhance their skillset, be it via new training opportunities or one of our programmes – such as signing up our Leadership Programme.

Our Head of People, Julie Davies, said: “The Academy is a fantastic

opportunity for ALL Freebridge colleagues, whether you are looking to develop your Trade Skills or join the Leadership Programme, there are opportunities for everyone both in person and via our new digital Academy platform.”

In turn, the launch of The Academy has also enabled us to be able to offer apprenticeships and work placements for young people in West Norfolk.



ONE TEAM ONE OFFICE



We made a key change to how we operate in 2023/24, as we closed our office and stores at Hamlin Way to bring all our colleagues under one roof.

In line with our new working relationship with Travis Perkins, our DLO colleagues now use a dedicated Fulfilment Centre for their everyday needs.

We have also adapted Juniper House to ensure that it is suitable for all of our colleagues to use, promoting a One Team, One Purpose attitude within the organisation.

Juniper is a modern working environment from which our team are able to deliver a strong service for our customers.

This move has also reduced our carbon footprint and operational costs considerably, given that all of the colleagues that once worked there are now either at our Juniper House office, using the Fulfilment Centre or are operating remotely.

TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE
BEING A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

OUR NEW VALUES

**PLAY YOUR PART
IN OUR VALUES**

OWN IT

- BE ACCOUNTABLE
- TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
- ACT

BELONG

- ENCOURAGE AND EMBRACE DIFFERENCE
- GET INVOLVED
- REACH YOUR POTENTIAL

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

BE THE CHANGE

- MAKE YOUR IDEAS COUNT
- PASSIONATE ABOUT PROGRESS
- BRING YOUR ENERGY

THINK CUSTOMER

- EXCEED EXPECTATIONS
- RIGHT FIRST TIME, EVERY TIME
- VALUE OUR CUSTOMERS

ONE TEAM ONE PURPOSE

- CONNECT WITH OUR PURPOSE
- BE PROUD OF WHAT WE DO
- COLLABORATE AND SUPPORT

We introduced our new company values.

The foundation of any organisation, such as Freebridge lies in its core values. It's what we say, what we do and how we act and behave.

With that in mind, we Introduced: Think Customer, One Team One Purpose, Belong, Own It, and Be the Change.

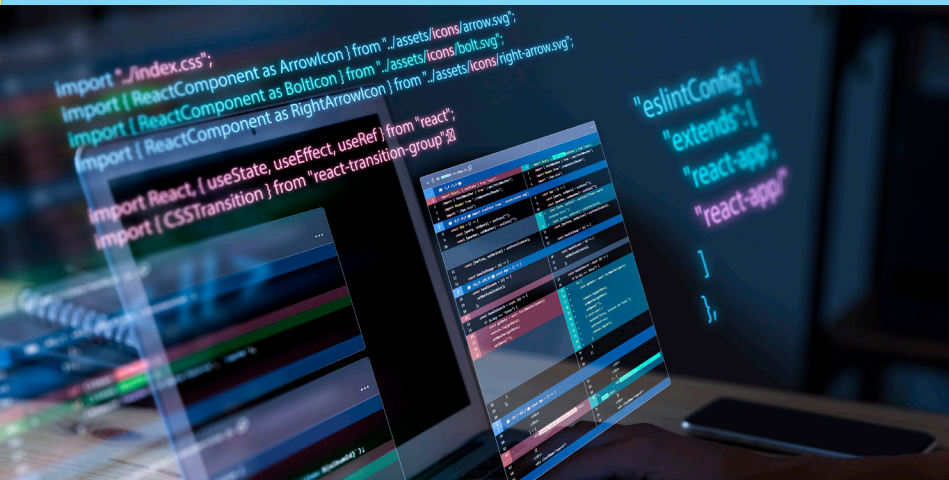
These five values reflect our commitment to our customer and to creating a workplace that fosters collaboration, inclusivity, accountability,

and customer-focus.

As well as this, we also introduced a values fundraising challenge amongst our colleagues which sees us supporting five charities in our communities. They are:

- The Purfleet Trust
- Forward Day Centre
- 8:56 Foundation
- Norfolk Hospice Tapping House
- King's Lynn Night Shelter

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE



Over the past year we have been able to develop improved business intelligence using software to help visualise our data better.

This increased intelligence has also helped us better understand our demand and capacity, which in turn has allowed us to shape our services and recruitment process.

TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE
TO CREATE HOMES, COMMUNITIES, AND
LOCAL SPACES TO BE PROUD OF

OUR NEW VOS

TO OFFER A BALANCED HOUSING MARKET



We've made progressive change to how we operate when it comes to the management of our empty properties (referred to as voids).

It's vitally important that our homes don't remain empty for long, so we decided to introduce a new way of working via the National Housing Federation (NHF) module, known as the Void Order Schedule (VOS).

In short, this provides a fully specified schedule for works, containing

descriptions which are fully priced and compatible with all leading systems, which future-proofs our way of working.

Ultimately, implementing this change will lead to more efficient operations, improved accuracy when it comes to estimated costing and, importantly, better resource management.

Getting empty homes filled with West Norfolk families as soon as we possibly can is one of our priorities.

YOUR HOME, YOUR VOICE



Our Customer Voice Team have been busier than ever ensuring that your voice is heard within Freebridge.

Our very first automated survey to gauge customer satisfaction with our Repair Service went live back in 2023. This pilot ran for 12 weeks and provided us with valuable insight as to how to shape our service moving forward.

We also joined forces with Hello Lamp Post to create a two-way communication platform that had the capability to reach any member of a community, simply by using their mobile phone.

This allowed members of the community to scan a QR code place within various communities and then interact with a host of questions on their device.

We were pleased to be able to host a Regional Tenants Voice Meeting alongside our Independent East colleagues Havebury Housing, too

Meanwhile, our digital engagement platform, myFreebridge, hosted vital consultations on Awaab's Law and Shaping The Future of our Homes – both of which gave you, our tenants, the chance to have your say on key issues within the housing industry.

TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE
TO CREATE HOMES, COMMUNITIES, AND
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TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

2022/2023 IN NUMBERS



We received

57

compliments in respect of the services we provide and how we provided them



Our dedicated team dealt with

357

complaints over the year



82.6%

of those complaints we received were dealt with within the time set out in our policy

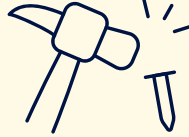


33

new properties built and/or took ownership of



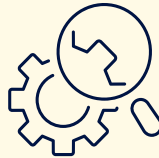
We completed
29,606
repairs during
the year



81.8%
of our emergency
repairs were completed
within 4 hours*



77.3%
of our urgent repairs
were completed
within 24 hours**



We spent
£3.7M
on major repairs and
maintenance



We spent
£8.8M
on routine repairs and
maintenance



We spent
£1.4M
on planned repairs and
maintenance

*The Emergency Repairs timescale changed from 4 hours to 24 hours partway through last financial year

**The Urgent Repairs timescale changed from 24 hours to 7 days partway through last financial year

SIMPLER HEALTH & SAFETY

BEING A GREAT PLACE TO WORK



Our Health and Safety Team made the sizeable step of introducing a brand-new system for all Freebridge colleagues to adopt.

This software has browser and mobile browser-based variations, is easily accessible for all colleagues on all devices.

The new systems help all colleagues when it comes to risk assessments, incident reporting, safe systems of work - and much more.

Health and Safety reporting is now much simpler for all, with Evotix allowing for the streamlining of our communication between field workers and those in the office to unite all operational processes and safe systems of working.

It has already proved to be beneficial to all teams within Freebridge, while also giving our Health and Safety Team much better oversight of all that is going on across the organisation.

SALTERS ROAD DEVELOPMENT



The year 2023/24 saw the first 15 homes be completed at Salters Road, an affordable development of 78 homes near Lynnsport in King's Lynn.

This scheme came about through a partnership between Freebridge, the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk and its development partner Lovell.

The scheme is all affordable, which means that so all will be either available at an affordable rent, or available to buy through shared ownership.

The first 15 of the high-quality one, two and three-bedroomed homes were completed in just under a year at the site, off Columbia Way.

Some 54 of the homes will have photo-voltaic solar panels, and 28 will have charging points for electric vehicles.

Paul Newbold, Director of New Homes and Commercial at Freebridge, said: "We appreciate the urgent need for affordable housing in a central location in King's Lynn and, in partnership with the Borough Council and Lovell, we are very pleased to have been able to help deliver this excellent development."

As well as Salters Road, we were also busy building more homes for those who need them in Docking, Stoke Ferry and Walsoken.

TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

TO CREATE HOMES, COMMUNITIES, AND LOCAL SPACES TO BE PROUD OF

TO OFFER A BALANCED HOUSING MARKET

HILLINGTON SQUARE GETS GREEN LIGHT

TO OFFER A BALANCED HOUSING MARKET

TO CREATE HOMES, COMMUNITIES, AND
LOCAL SPACES TO BE PROUD OF



The sixth and final phase of our flagship Hillington Square development saw planning approved in March – meaning we are on-course to complete the project.

When complete, the Hillington Square regeneration project in King's Lynn will have created

66 much-needed affordable homes and will have completely modernising a site which was first built on in the 1960s.

It will also deliver important new commercial units to replace the Providence Street community centre.

OUR WAVE 2 JOURNEY



Last year, we told you all about the £1.323 million worth of Government Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1 funding we received – and that we matched that amount to create a pot of £2.7 million to spend on turning some of our least efficient properties into warm and energy-efficient homes for our customers, while also helping reduce carbon emissions.

In 2023/24, we began work on some of the 99 homes that this funding is to be spent on by delivering energy-efficient upgrades to each of our properties.

These updates will reduce our carbon emissions, increase energy efficiency, and improve the energy performance certificates (EPC) in our homes.

On the 19 properties we had completed work on by the end of the year, we have

reduced the carbon emissions they produced by a combined 60 tCO₂e*, which is the equivalent to filling 60 hot air balloons (500m³ each), driving 222,950 miles in a diesel car or 60 direct flights from Paris to New York.

One of the criteria for the funding is that we must achieve an EPC rating of C in each property by the time we have finished the works. To put that into context, the majority of the 99 properties we have identified for works had either E or D EPC ratings.

So far, all 19 properties have been converted from EPC ratings of D or E to ratings of B or C.

*CO₂e - (Carbon dioxide equivalent or CO₂e means the number of metric tons of CO₂ emissions with the same global warming potential as one metric ton of another greenhouse gas)

ON TO YEAR FOUR OF BUILDING BETTER FUTURES

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this year's Annual Report for Tenants.

We appreciate and understand the challenges of the current climate and want all of you to know that we are here to help and support you.

As per our company values, we will always Think Customer and you will be our number one priority at all times.

We're looking forward to year four of our five-year plan and will continue to deliver upon the objectives we have set ourselves, to ensure we're building better futures in West Norfolk.

Thanks again for your time and we look forward to once again updating you with our progress next year.







Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING