



we grow together



Welcome to Soha's review for residents of the business year 2019/20, which sets out some of the achievements of the last year.



2019/20 had already had its share of challenges – for Soha and our residents alike – from navigating the ongoing rollout of Universal Credit and wider welfare reform, planning for the uncertain impact of Brexit, working behind the scenes to improve our systems and technologies and thinking hard about how to improve the carbon footprint that our homes leave on the environment.

Then March 2020 saw us all face unprecedented challenges in the face of the global coronavirus pandemic, many of which will endure for some time to come. Almost overnight, we were plunged into a new lockdown reality of limited social contact, which not only impacted us all on a personal level, but also forced Soha to radically change the way it operates.

I want to thank you all for the kindness, patience and understanding that you have shown us during these times and to reassure you that we're doing everything we can to get back to normal service as quickly as possible. I also want to thank our incredible staff for the level of dedication, determination and agility that they showed in not only transforming our services, but also going well beyond to support those in need in many and varying ways. I am in awe of everything you have achieved.

Some of the highlights of 2019/20 are pictured on the next page, but I also wanted to tell you about a few proud moments:

May 2019 saw the Independent Living service receive an 'outstanding' rating from the Centre for Housing and Support, part of the Chartered Institute of Housing. The assessors remarked on the quality of our homes and services, including the initiative to become an officially accredited dementia-friendly organisation, and a partnership working with Oxfordshire County Council's Adult Social Care to embed an Occupational Therapy service in Soha.

In July we drew down a second investment (following one in 2018) from the Pensions Insurance Corporation to enable us to build more new homes.

In September we announced a new Housing First project. This is a global movement prioritising independent homes for homeless people alongside intensive support for chronic health and social care needs. Six homes from our existing stock and intensive support are being provided in a pilot with South Oxfordshire District Council. It is being independently evaluated to determine the impact on homeless people, the community and the public purse, the results of which will hopefully allow us to deliver more homes like this in the future.

November saw the launch of our first Communities strategy on which Members will lead. We have a focus across our communities of combatting loneliness and boosting social connections with an initiative around youth provision in Henley-on-Thames. It is exciting to see how the value of our being a mutual organisation is gaining traction in strengthening our communities. At the end of 2019, Membership was opened to Soha staff as well as residents.

In February we welcomed a new co-opted member to the board with strategic experience of social housing development. Dave Lakin is Director of Development for Grand Union Housing Group, a social landlord roughly twice the size of Soha.

You can meet all the Board members on page 8. I thank them all for their commitment to making Soha a well-run, financially secure association and for always putting tenants at the heart of what we do. Two Board members who are tenants will step down next year at the end of their terms of office. The tenant perspective is integral to Soha's philosophy and residents play a vital role on our Board. We will be looking for two new Board members in the coming year and will be supporting potential applicants with leadership and management training for residents that wish to take part. Maybe it could be you joining our Board. Do consider it!

With good wishes,

Lucy Weston, Chair of the Soha Housing Board



milestones



Photo: iStock

←

Soha's Housing First project puts a roof over someone's head, gives them the support to start addressing other needs and the stability to make different lifestyle choices.



→

The evaluation of our Independent Living team by Erosh, the national consortium for sheltered and retirement housing, was based on desk research and on-site visits to accommodation. Fewer than half of the services which are put forward for this voluntary assessment achieve 'outstanding' as Soha did.



↑

Meetings of Members are always productive and very often great fun, too. We wonder what the joke was!



←

Members chose the focus of our Communities strategy and have helped make the decision about where to invest time and finances into realising it.



→

The Christmas party hosted by Soha's Seniors Group saw friendships made and renewed over a meal and musical entertainment. The Oxfordshire County Museums service brought along toys from yesteryear to hand round, discuss and awake memories.



↑

Getting crafty at the Great Western Park (Didcot) summer event. Children enjoyed Soha's free craft activity at this annual event. They could take home their creations, to the delight of their parents!

we grow together

membership means...



“““

Being included in decisions with the chance to have my ideas and points formally holding value.
CH, Didcot

Being a good neighbour to Soha tenants and staff.
AH, Cholsey

Playing a part in the decisions that Soha makes that affect residents.
SS, Cuddesdon

Making a difference – especially with my activist hat on – I'm a people person and love to be involved.
DB-L, Wheatley

Improving my neighbourhood.
BL, Abingdon

**“Caring about where I live
and the wellbeing of my neighbours”**

DE, Thame

Becoming more involved in the management of my Soha home.
AF, Goring

Putting into practice my belief that the feedback from customer to supplier in any line of business is vital to success.
WM, Woodcote

year in numbers

number of homes

total number of homes	6,993
new homes added in 2019/20	162
mutual exchanges	64
total lettings	460
shared ownerships sold	68

Planned maintenance

kitchens	71
redecorations	1,198
windows and doors	520
roofs	38
bathrooms	80
heating systems	313

Communication

our customer services advisors handled	
99,312	phone calls
11,994	emails
609	live web chats
359	offline web chats
29,759	visits to our website
2,410	tasks for Customer Services through the app
1,571	tasks for other departments through the app

Resident satisfaction*

89%	satisfied with their neighbourhood
90%	satisfied with Soha's overall service
87%	satisfied with the quality of their home
80%	satisfied with the lettings process
75%	satisfied that we listen to their views

*telephone research carried out by MEL

Complaints

17	outstanding from the previous year
64	new in 2019/20
79	resolved
2	still in progress

Evictions

13	due to rent arrears
2	due to anti-social behaviour

Our residents

We have **6,993** households which include:

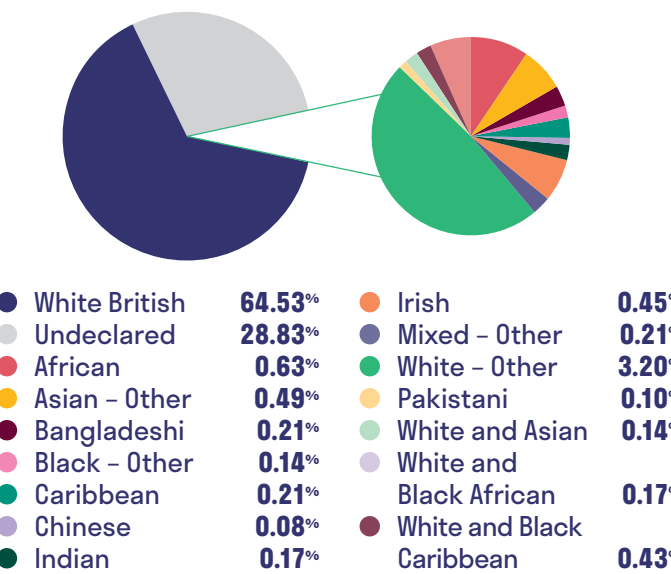
15,251	residents	5,335	general needs rented
322	leasehold	27	keyworker households
691	low-cost home ownership	521	independent living
2	market rented or unsold	95	supported and Extra Care

We had **700 Members** at March 2020

Gender	Female 59.46% Male 40.33% Other/undeclared 0.21%
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Age	18-34 20.22% 35-59 45.01% 60+ 30.27% undeclared 4.50%
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Ethnicity



Day-to-day repairs

Total number	17,585
at a cost of	£2,581,667
in an average time to complete of (target 8.8. days)	8.6 days
Repairs fixed at first visit (target 85%)	90.3%



Neighbourhood satisfaction

501	Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases
7	notices served due to ASB
9	court orders due to ASB
100%	of ASB cases resolved
84%	of residents are satisfied with how we handled their ASB case

More than 4 in 10 anti-social behaviour cases relate to noise

Out & about

956	estate inspections carried out plus monthly inspections in Extra Care schemes
79	handy-person visits carried out

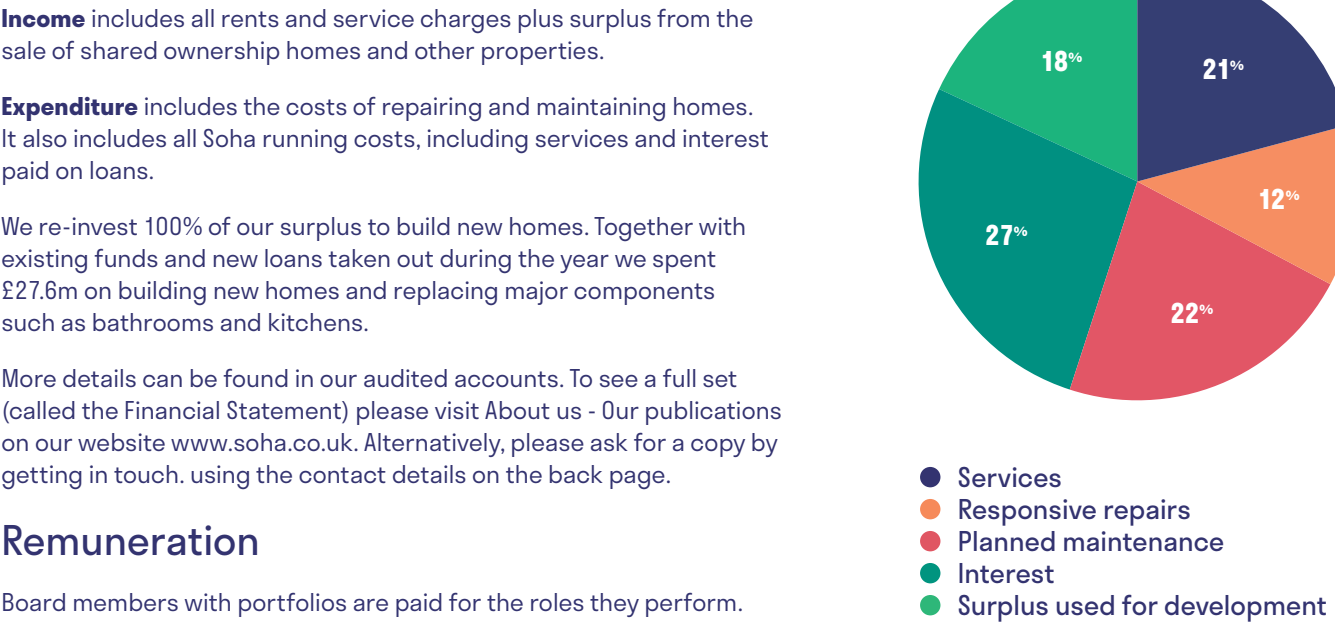
where the money goes

Soha Housing doesn't make a profit. All our income is spent on maintaining your home, investing in new services and building new homes.

2019/20



2018/19



It takes a while to get all the audited figures together to see the full picture of any business year. The Board of Soha and our Members' Forum both have their AGMs in September for this reason. While the activities of last year seem even more distant given the turbulence of recent months, it is important to review and learn from previous activities.

We grow together

As we entered this difficult spring and summer we did so as a strong organisation. Soha's foundations as a community, mutual organisation, where staff and residents work together, have been invaluable to us all in these lockdown months. We have all experienced just how important our homes, our neighbours and our communities are to each of us.

Our job is also more important than ever – supporting residents, supporting communities and building the new homes people need to have control over their own futures. Our accounts show our financial strength and stability, which gives Soha firm foundation in these uncertain times, and the ability to continue to respond as the impact of the pandemic continues to be felt.

In her introduction to this report our Chair, Lucy, mentions the communities aspect of our work. Our long record of working with our residents and with local organisations gave us a head start when Soha staff from all teams mobilised to provide practical support and signposting to residents during lockdown. Throughout this next year we will build on last year's foundations to keep our residents connected, understanding how important community and connection are in times like these.

I described Soha as a mutual organisation. This is an ownership structure that enables a tenant, shared owner or leaseholder to become a shareholding Member. You get to have a real say in the future direction of the company – only arguably being a shareholder in Soha is more important because you're having your say about what's happening on your doorstep, both to your home and neighbourhood.

It is Members who decided what the focus of our Communities strategy should be, and Members who are helping us decide how to spend the budget to bring about real change in our neighbourhoods. The events of the recent past, and the way Soha has responded by investing time, energy and cash in strengthening communities, makes a powerful case for my encouraging those of you who haven't yet discovered Membership to take a closer look.

On page 5, you'll see in some Members' own words what it means to them. If you're toying with the idea of becoming a Member, don't delay in using the reply-paid card inserted in this Report. While you're there, tell us what you think of our services – both the good and what we need to continue working on to improve – to be in with a chance of winning £100 just in time for Christmas!

I regularly shadow all the Soha teams and always value what I learn when I'm out meeting with you in your homes or at our events. I always follow up on your feedback and we're always keen to hear what you think.

Thank you to everyone who is part of the Soha family for all we have achieved together, and how we have pulled together during this time. I am proud to play my part in an organisation which has shown itself to be so adaptable, determined, clear sighted and strong. I thank each member of our team – resident, staff member, board member, contractor and partner – who has focused every day on working together to keep us all safe, help us all look out for each other, and simply keep the show on the road.

This next year is unpredictable. What we do know is that we will join forces to make the best of the opportunities that will exist, and to cope with the challenges that we may face.

We live in an area of the country where a huge number of people struggle to afford homes. My hope for this forthcoming year is that we will use this period of transition and re-prioritisation to build a kinder, more secure and more cohesive society, where we properly value the contributions made by everyone and where we can all afford to live our lives.

At Soha, we look forward to playing our part in bringing this about.

Kate Wareing
Kate Wareing, Chief Executive



meet the board



Lucy Weston

Chair of the Board, sits on Personnel and Remuneration Committee

Having trained as a Chartered Accountant at Andersen, I worked at Deloitte before taking various Finance Director roles in the charity sector. I am a Non-Executive Director of Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and a Governor of Oxford Brookes University. I joined the Board in September 2014.



Victor Breach

Vice-Chair of the Board, sits on Personnel and Remuneration Committee

I am a Soha tenant serving on Soha's Board following a long involvement with the (then) Tenants', now Members' Forum.

I am a plumber with a wealth of local knowledge and experience of managing stakeholder expectations, along with good experience of Board membership. I joined the Board in September 2012 because I believe that tenant involvement at Board level helps Soha to achieve its aims and objectives and benefit all its residents.

Tim Bolton

Sits on Audit and Risk Committee

I was Deputy Director of Finance, later acting Director of Finance, at Oxford Brookes University from 2000 until I retired in 2012. Before that I held a number of senior finance roles. I was appointed to the Board in June 2014 and have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know our residents better over the years.



Victoria Dingle

Sits on Audit and Risk Committee

I am a qualified nutritionist and taught for a number of years. I've worked or volunteered across both the private and public sector and have experience of customer service, accountancy and training. I am a fully involved resident living in Henley, a member of the Women's Housing Forum, a regular Inside Housing columnist and presenter at Tpas conferences and other housing events. When I joined the Board in September 2018 I set out to make sure that all residents have a voice when making decisions.



Jennifer Ekelund

Sits on Audit and Risk Committee

I have worked in leadership positions in sustainable development for the University of Oxford and in the charity sector for over a decade. I set up my own consultancy in 2013 and formerly chaired the national student social action charity Student Hubs. I joined the Board in September 2016.



Dave Lakin

Co-opted Board Member

I've been on the Board since February this year. I'm the Director of Development and Commercial at Grand Union Housing Group but have worked in the social housing sector for over 27 years, delivering services to residents, developing new homes and having responsibility for sales programmes. I live in Milton Keynes.



Nicky Mellings

Chair of Personnel and Remuneration Committee

I was a Wing Commander in the RAF for 17 years until 2011, moving home every few years. Since then I have undertaken a variety of voluntary and work

roles and have enjoyed getting to know my local area and becoming settled. I have re-joined the RAF as a Wing Commander part-time and, in 2013, joined Soha's Board to play an active part in shaping and improving homes for families and communities.



David Mody

Sits on Personnel and Remuneration Committee

I come from a telecoms and IT background working for companies including Vodafone and BT. I specialise in risk management, most recently working for BT as

Head of Risk. I have over 15 years of housing sector experience having previously sat on the board of Bracknell Forest Homes. I joined the Board in 2017. I believe that building quality homes and supporting communities is at the very heart of what we must do.

Nasreen Razaq Al-Hamdani

I am a Soha tenant in Oxford, working as a Project Assistant in Quantum Computing. I have been an involved resident for 12 years in various roles – from mystery shopper to Chair of Scrutiny, joining the Board in September 2012. I've delivered presentations and workshops on co-regulation and best practice to tenants and housing associations across the UK. I also took part in the See the Person campaign which tackled stereotyping and stigmatisation of social tenants. I am currently completing a strategic level CIMA qualification.



Harjit Sandhu

Chair of Audit and Risk Committee

I'm an accountant working with a charity that provides housing and support across Oxfordshire, particularly to young people. I joined the Soha Board in September 2013 and love being a part of Soha because I strongly believe in social housing – the UK is a developed country with a rich economy and nobody in our society should be homeless. Everybody should have the opportunity to live in a decent home, irrespective of their status, background or means.



Hayley Smith

Sits on Personnel and Remuneration Committee

I did a degree in Construction Management with an emphasis on social housing and my dissertation was on energy efficiency in existing social housing

stock. I have worked for 15 years in maintenance, including asbestos management, in various housing association roles. After having a long-held interest in social housing I welcomed the opportunity to get involved in the strategic side through joining the Board, which I did in 2018.



Kate Wareing

Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing, Executive Board Member

I am Soha's Chief Executive and have over twenty years' experience of working for housing, social sector and not-for-profit organisations. I have managed and commissioned housing services in my career prior to Soha and worked as Director of Oxfam's UK Poverty Programme. I joined the Board in July 2018.

get in touch ...

..to talk to us about becoming a Member,
or your tenancy or home. We're looking
forward to hear from you!

Email

housing@soha.co.uk

Phone

0800 014 15 45 (Freephone)

You can also use this number to reach the
out of hours service.

Website

www.soha.co.uk



The Soha Housing app

Join over 1,500 residents already
using the free Soha app to report
repairs, pay rent, check your tenancy
details and much more 24/7.



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Soha Housing



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A charitable registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (No. 28410R).
Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Other information

We send you this annual report as part of our commitment to make sure that all residents are kept up to date with how Soha Housing is governed and managed. We send out a paper copy even if you have told us you prefer to receive e-newsletters or no publications at all. If you would like to sign up for occasional e-newsletters or for electronic versions of our Hometalk and Tenants' Times magazines, or to receive alternative formats of our publications such as large print, audio or in other languages, please contact communications@soha.co.uk