
Communities Strategy 2025-28

Meeting:	Board AGM
Date:	September 2025
Agenda item:	
Status:	Non-confidential
Action required:	For Decision
Portfolio holder:	

Communities Strategy 2025-28

Purpose of report

The Communities Strategy is the only Soha strategy that requires the approval of members, who have the power to set the organisation's ambition and approach to resident involvement, membership and community development.

This Communities Strategy sets the direction for our Communities work over the next three years, with an action plan for the next year to be reviewed annually.

Key issues

This paper provides:

- a) A summary of why our communities work is important to us as a community mutual housing association,
- b) an update on the action plan agreed in last year's communities strategy,
- c) a summary of what we heard from residents as part of the consultation,
- d) our aspirations and ambitions for this area of our work, and
- e) an overview of how we resource these ambitions

What evidence is the recommendation based on?

This strategy builds on our existing communities work and best practice from similar organisations

Resident and staff consultation, including working groups

There has been extensive consultation with residents over the past few months – more details on this are in appendix C. Draft have been discussed at the Members' Forum and Board before the production of this final version.

Assessment of relevant risk(s)

The primary risk is that the priorities do not reflect those of residents, and that we fail to live up to our identity as a community mutual. The implications of this would be reputational (reduced trust with residents) and operational (less effective services)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The strategy outlines plans to broaden the range of residents we involve in decision-making and what we will do to achieve this

Recommendation

For the AGM to approve the strategy.

Introduction

This Communities Strategy outlines Soha's approach to our work with residents and partners in our communities. This aligns with our new [Corporate Plan](#) which sets out our organisational ambitions and builds upon the experiences and lessons we've learned over the last five years.

In 2017, we made the decision to become a **community mutual** – sharing power with residents and staff in the big decisions about how we work. This is both who we are (our identity) and how we work (it's baked into the rules about how we're run).

As a **community** mutual, we are deeply rooted in our communities – the villages and towns where we have homes, and the local organisations which we partner with.

As a community **mutual**, we share power and decision-making with members, as well as investing heavily in resident engagement and involvement.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) oversees housing associations like Soha, setting standards, ensuring financial viability, and promoting value for money. The Consumer Standards lay out the expectations of social housing providers, including ensuring we:

- keep tenants safe in their homes
- listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right
- are accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect
- know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them
- collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs

Our 2025-28 Communities Strategy explains [why](#) we believe in membership and resident engagement, shows the [progress](#) we've made under the previous strategy and outlines how we [consulted](#) on this strategy. It then lays out our [aspirations](#) for the next three years, describing how we will [resource](#) and provide [accountability](#) for these plans.

This strategy is the only strategy that requires the approval of our members, who are able to set the organisation's ambitions, our approach to resident involvement, membership and community development.

1| Why our communities work matters

a. Vision and Values

Soha's vision is for **vibrant, sustainable and resilient communities** where everyone can find a home.

All our values are relevant to why and how we carry out our communities work:

Committed - because we want to put residents first, we need to work closely together

Invested in local communities - we do more than just provide houses and services - we are passionate about building stronger home and communities, in partnership with individuals, communities and partner organisations.

Open and honest - we share information and decision-making spaces, so we can be held to account

Mutual - we belong to our residents and communities and make decisions together

We are here for the long term - because we are committed to residents and communities for the long term, we want residents and partners to shape our work, so that we're building sustainably towards shared goals.

As a community mutual housing association, our residents are at the centre of everything that we do, and our approach to engagement seeks to ensure that every single one of our residents has the opportunity to collaborate, scrutinise and shape our services, and that they feel supported to achieve the community aspirations important to them.

b. The power of membership

On 12th October 2017, Soha took a decision to shift to a mutual shareholding model, placing real power in the hands of residents and staff who choose to become members.

We are a stronger organisation because of the strong partnership between our residents, members and our Board.

Membership gives residents significant power - to actively participate in discussions, engage in decision-making, hold our Board and executive team accountable, and shape our understanding of the needs, priorities and vision of all residents.

Residents' right to vote on some of the key decisions, from community projects to leadership positions, is a cornerstone of our democratic approach. The responsibilities of residents, members, resident group representatives, executive team and Board are laid out in Appendix A.

c. The value of resident involvement in decision-making

Why do we believe wider involvement in decision-making improves decision-making?



Trust the experts - we believe that the experts about what it's like to live in Thame are our residents who live in Thame! Similarly, the people who can best help us become more inclusive in how we deliver our services to people with disabilities are those with lived experience of disabilities. Therefore, we want to understand and value the expertise and experience of everyone affected by decisions.



Mutual Accountability for the long-term - one of our values is the fact we are here for the long-term. This means that the Board and staff are custodians of Soha, with a responsibility to pass it on to future custodians in good health. The accountability to residents that mutuality provides (through the AGM voting, as well as advisory groups) mean we make decisions with clear accountability to members about decisions which affect us for the long-term. Residents' rents pay for Soha, including investment to keep homes in good condition and build new homes for others in our communities who need secure, affordable housing.



Representation - residents from different ages, ethnicities, household types, and economic backgrounds can help ensure that decisions reflect the real needs of the whole community, not just a subset. Whilst recognising that not all residents want to be involved in decision-making, we aim for everyone to be able to say that decisions are made "with us, not for us."



Service improvement and innovation - two of our cultural principles are 'residents first' and 'constantly learning' - we believe that by listening carefully to residents' experiences and involving them in the design of our services, we can serve residents well and constantly improve how we deliver our services.



Regulatory - the Regulator of Social Housing in England emphasises resident involvement and empowerment as part of the consumer standards - this mirrors our own ambitions as a community mutual.

Recent examples of where we have made better decisions because of resident involvement in decision-making include:



Scrutiny review of our repairs service leading to the creation of Soha Response

Over the years, residents have consistently expressed a desire for Soha to bring the repairs service in-house. A Scrutiny review of our repairs service led to the recommendation to our Board of exploring setting up our own repairs service. We explored the benefits with residents, leading to the launch of Soha Response in May 2025.



Corporate Plan 25/26 Resident workshops held throughout 2024 informed Soha's vision and goals, directly shaping the actions in the 2025/26 Corporate Plan. Over 750 residents and staff contributed.



Independent Living Review During a Scrutiny Group review, concerns were raised by residents about the cost and changing needs related to the OK Each-day service. Following consultation, the decision was made not to renew the contract with the provider.

d. The impact of partnering with residents and other organisations

Over the past 18 months, we have supported residents and local partners to transform green spaces into vibrant, inclusive, community spaces – these projects show what's possible when residents lead and Soha support. They reflect our commitment to empowering communities and building places people are proud to call home. Some examples include:

Sonning Common Garden Developed in partnership with the Parish Council, local Guides, Scouts, schools, and the Eco SoCo group, this sustainable garden project has:

- Brought together residents of all ages, strengthening community bonds
- Promoted environmental awareness through hands-on learning
- Created a shared space for wellbeing, relaxation, and social interaction
- Boosted biodiversity and supported Soha's green agenda

"The garden's been a real focus for the village – young people planting next to older residents has been brilliant to see." – local volunteer

Memorial Church Garden This project was identified by a local Soha resident. Residents joined Soha, the Parish Council, and local secondary school students to

restore the overgrown memorial garden on a Soha estate, honouring the Polish families who lived and worshipped there after WWII. Together, they:

- Revived a space of deep local and cultural significance
- Planted bulbs and a cherry tree, and installed bat/bee boxes to support wildlife
- Introduced a new heritage interpretation board, preserving local history for future generations
- Strengthened a sense of shared identity and pride in place

"It's wonderful that young people now understand the history here – and we have a peaceful, welcoming space for all." – Whitchurch resident

[Pop-up Café at Petypher House](#) At one of our independent living schemes, Petypher House, residents welcomed the idea of monthly popup cafés run by Vale Community Impact, creating a lively space where they and local visitors connect. The events offer informal advice, social interaction, and guest speakers, and are always well attended. Volunteer drivers bring in visitors, helping to break down barriers and showcase the benefits of Independent living. Residents have also organised outings open to external guests, leading to new relationships and a stronger sense of community.

[Didcot Powerhouse Fund](#) Along with a range of other organisations and businesses, we have been keen supporters of the Didcot Powerhouse Fund, which enables donors to make a significant change in the lives of neighbours in their local community. We are immensely proud of the impact of this over the past three years – including £407k raised, 70 grants to local causes and nearly 9,000 direct local beneficiaries. The [impact report](#) outlines the fantastic work of the Fund.

2| Progress

a. Headlines from previous action plan

This Communities Strategy builds on the work of our previous strategy and action plan. The headlines for our locality-based working over the past year have been to:

1. Review the effectiveness of how locality teams work together - including collective working days to improve cross-team working
2. Improve how we communicate about local priorities in more targeted ways - including the introduction of locality newsletters to keep residents informed about local priorities
3. Improve follow-up when residents respond to surveys about services - including follow-up calls to understand the reasons for any dissatisfaction

The headlines for our approach to resident involvement were to:

1. Deliver two scrutiny reviews leading to service improvement - including reviews of locality-based working and communications, with a third review of home ownership underway
2. Ensure meaningful resident involvement in the corporate plan priority-setting process - including over 750 people contributing
3. Maintain accountability through the disability awareness and seniors groups
4. Engage with younger residents

b. Action tracker

A more in-depth action tracker is included in Appendix B.

3| Consultation

a. Key messages from residents and partners

We have spent the past few months consulting with residents about the future of our communities work. We have done this through:

[Resident-led groups](#), including Scrutiny, Members' Forum and specialist panels

[Local events and workshops](#), where residents have shared their views in person

[Thematic consultations](#) on specific themes such as repairs, service charges and community investment

[Digital engagement](#), including online polls, email feedback and social media comments, to reach a broader range of residents

Through insights from residents and data analysis, these key themes have emerged:

[\(a\) We want to hear from a wider range of residents](#)

We recognise that current engagement doesn't fully reflect the diversity of our resident population. Demographic analysis shows gaps in who takes part – and younger residents, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and working households are under-represented. Resident groups have told us that for our decisions to carry legitimacy, they must reflect the full range of resident experiences.

[\(b\) We want to invest in strengthening long-term partnerships](#)

Residents consistently raise issues that sit beyond housing – such as wellbeing, financial resilience, and community safety. Organisations we partner with are often far better placed to address these needs. Therefore, we need strong, lasting partnerships with local services and organisations to tackle root causes and deliver meaningful, joined-up support. We want to be more intentional about working collaboratively to deepen our impact and build trust within communities.

[\(c\) We want to be increasingly local in how we work](#)

Residents have made it clear that they really value the changes we've made in adopting a locality-based model. Feedback from events, scrutiny, and frontline teams shows that people value having a visible local presence and quick responses to local issues.

Our analysis of engagement and service use show us that different areas have different priorities, and we want to be better at addressing these. In addition, residents want to see decisions made with, not just for, their local communities.

b. Consultation Activities

Details of how we consulted on this strategy are outlined in Appendix C.

4| Aspirations

Based on what we heard from residents in the consultation, and the work we've been working towards over the past five years, our primary focus areas for the next three years are:

a. Broadening Participation We'll create more inclusive ways for a wider range of residents to get involved and have their voices heard.

b. Building Partnerships We'll work more closely with local partners to address broader community issues and deliver long-term impact.

c. Devolving Power Locally We'll shift more decision-making to a local level – through more clearly understanding and articulating resident-led priorities, changing how we deliver our services and putting a premium on a relational service model (including in-person visibility).

d. Developing as a Community Mutual We'll build on our foundations as a community mutual and explore new ways of sharing and using our power and resources for maximum local impact.

Let's consider each of these in turn:

a. Broadening participation

Current Position: We hugely value the contribution of residents who are already involved in decision making, but recognise that this is not fully reflect the diversity of our communities. Whilst we hold demographic data on residents, this is not routinely compared to involvement data, so we have limited data on how representative current involved residents are of the wider resident base.

What We're Aiming For: A more inclusive and representative approach to resident involvement, with participation opportunities that reflect the needs and preferences of different groups (e.g. age, ethnicity, disability, working status). We really want residents to know their voice is heard and that involvement is open to everyone.

Our Plans:

- Collect and analyse demographic data of involved residents.
- Identify gaps and test targeted engagement approaches to reach underrepresented groups.

- Offer a wider range of flexible, accessible ways to get involved—online, in person, and informally.
- Build relationships through trusted local networks and community-led approaches.

How We'll Measure It:

- Establish a baseline by comparing involvement demographics to overall resident demographics.
- Track changes over time to assess improvements in reach and representation.
- Use feedback surveys and focus groups to understand whether residents feel involvement is inclusive and meaningful.
- Report regularly to residents and governance on progress, learning, and next steps.

How We'll Deliver it

1. Collect and Analyse Demographic Data of Involved Residents

- Improve processes to capture key demographic data
- Update data protection and consent procedures to reassure residents how their data will be used
- Implement regular data reviews to compare involvement data against overall resident demographics using existing systems

2. Identify Gaps and Test Targeted Engagement

- Conduct an initial gap analysis using baseline demographic comparison to identify underrepresented groups (e.g. younger residents, ethnic minorities, disabled residents)
- Develop short-term pilots targeting these groups (e.g. youth sessions, multicultural outreach to groups, disability-focussed events)
- Partner with community groups to co-design and deliver engagement activities that are culturally competent and accessible
- Document learning from each pilot to adapt future approaches

3. Widen Participation Methods

- Introduce a flexible involvement menu

- Trial time- and location-flexible events that don't rely on evening/weekend in-person attendance
- Make digital platforms accessible, with alternative formats (e.g. Easy Read, captioned videos, translation options)

4. Build Relationships via Trusted Local Networks

- Map and engage with existing community leaders, partners and groups, especially those with links to underrepresented residents
- Support and invest in resident-led initiatives that foster local trust and capacity (e.g. community fund, training, co-hosted events).
- Embed locality-based engagement plans tailored to each area's demographic and social profile.

b. Building partnerships

Current Position: We've started mapping local groups, organisations, and services across our areas. While there are good examples of partnership working, this is not consistent or embedded across all communities and relationships often depend on individual contacts rather than a shared approach.

What We're Aiming For

- Strong, consistent partnerships that help deliver better outcomes for residents beyond housing.
- Joined-up working to address shared priorities such as wellbeing, inclusion, and community resilience.
- A clear, collaborative role for Soha in supporting community-led activity.

Our Plans

- Complete partnership mapping in all areas and identify gaps or duplication.
- Build a shared framework for partnership working that sets out expectations, values, and ways of working.
- Invest time in building and maintaining trusted relationships with local partners.
- Support and enable residents to connect with and lead local networks and initiatives.

How We'll Measure It

- Track the number, type and spread of active partnerships across our geography.

How We'll Deliver it

1. Completing Partnership Mapping

To ensure a strong foundation for joined-up working, we will:

- Finalise the mapping of local community groups, voluntary organisations, and services across all of Soha's localities.
- Identify areas of strength, duplication, and gaps in coverage—particularly in rural or underserved areas.
- Maintain an up-to-date directory of partnerships, accessible to locality teams and relevant staff.

2. Developing a Shared Framework for Partnership Working

To embed a consistent and values-led approach to partnerships, we will:

- Co-produce a partnership framework with internal teams and external stakeholders. This will outline shared values, expectations, roles, and ways of working.
- Align internal systems and processes (e.g. referrals, grant applications, joint events) to support consistent and efficient partnership practice.
- Provide training and guidance to staff to ensure the framework is well understood and applied across the organisation

3. Strengthening and Maintaining Trusted Relationships

- Designate named locality leads or contact officers for key partner organisations to improve consistency.
- Create a regular offer of engagement for partners, such as:
 - Themed partnership forums or roundtables
 - Joint training or capacity-building sessions
 - Informal networking and feedback opportunities
- Gather regular feedback from partners to understand how Soha is perceived and where we can improve.

4. Supporting and Enabling Community-Led Partnerships

To help residents and local groups take a leading role in community action, we will:

- Offer small grants and in-kind support through our community fund to resident- and partner-led initiatives that align with shared priorities
- Promote and support resident and partner networking events by locality or theme (e.g. wellbeing, youth, food security)
- Share stories and case studies of successful partnership work led by residents or grassroots organisations to encourage further collaboration
- Continue to back and catalyse local fundraising initiatives such as the Didcot Powerhouse Fund

c. Devolving power locally

Current Position: We offer a wide range of involvement activities, but it's unclear who they work for and who's left out. Much of our formal engagement is centred in Didcot, with long-standing evening meetings that focus on matters about Soha's services in all areas – not specific to local areas. Local influence is limited in some areas and not yet linked to service delivery or budgets.

What We're Aiming For: A more localised approach where residents shape decisions that affect their neighbourhoods, shaped by involvement that's flexible, place-based, and built around local needs and preferences. We want to shift from consultation to shared decision-making, backed by real influence over services and resources. We know how much residents value the relational element of our service, including in-person visibility, so want to continue being personal, rather than bureaucratic, in how we deliver our services.

Our Plans:

- Review current engagement activity by location, time, and participation to identify gaps.
- Develop local engagement models that reflect the diversity of our communities and geography.
- Pilot resident-led decision-making at neighbourhood level—including local budgets and service shaping.
- Build staff capacity to support local approaches and empower resident leadership.

- Become more visible at a local level, including make it easy for residents to reach staff members who understand their neighbourhood, who are able to address issues in as relational a way as possible
- Grow into our identity as a community mutual, with greater intention around how we operate – more details of what this might look like are included in Appendix E.

How We'll Measure It:

- Monitor participation and diversity in local engagement activities across all areas
- Review which decisions are made where, how they're influenced by residents, and how resources are allocated
- Use resident feedback to assess how meaningful and accessible local involvement feels
- Report to residents on service changes and outcomes that result from local input through locality newsletters
- Increased scores in Tenant Satisfaction Measures of 'agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect' and 'satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods'

How We'll Deliver it

1. Reviewing how we engage

To ensure that resident involvement is equitable and effective, we will:

- Audit existing engagement activities by location, time of day, and participation levels
- Analyse who is taking part—and who is not—across different areas and formats
- Use this insight to identify underrepresented communities or locations and tailor future approaches to fill those gaps
- Review the accessibility and format of long-standing activities (e.g. evening meetings in Didcot) to assess relevance and reach

2. Developing Local Engagement Models

To make engagement more relevant and responsive to local contexts, we will:

- Co-design local engagement models with residents and staff, based on local demographics, community priorities, and geography

- Ensure models are flexible—ranging from informal conversations to structured panels—and inclusive of all age groups, backgrounds, and digital abilities
- Pilot a place-based approach in selected neighbourhoods, reflecting different types of communities (from town/villages to estates)
- Embed these models into team ways of working, with clear expectations around how staff will support and act on local input

3. Piloting Resident-Led Decision-Making

To shift from consultation to shared power, we will:

- Identify pilot areas where residents can take part in shaping services and allocating resources (e.g. local budgets, environmental improvements, community activities)
- Create clear and transparent structures for decision-making, supported by training and facilitation for residents
- Support and invest in capacity-building for local leaders and resident groups to take on greater influence
- Learn from pilots and scale up what works, ensuring the approach remains community-led

4. Building Staff Capacity and Enabling Culture Change

To embed local power in Soha's organisational culture, we will:

- Train staff in facilitation, co-production, and asset-based community development to better support resident leadership.
- Develop internal guidance for supporting local engagement and decision-making processes.
- Create space in team planning and performance management to prioritise local influence and responsiveness.
- Encourage cross-team learning to share successes and challenges in devolving power.

d. Developing as a Community Mutual

Current Position: Our status as a community mutual shapes some important elements of our governance (including voting on key decisions), but does not permeate as widely as it might in how we operate.

What We're Aiming For: In the second year of the strategy, we want to develop our practice around what it means to be a community mutual – including how we use our money and power for maximum local impact. For example, greater community involvement in development aspirations (including where we build and who we work with) and putting a greater emphasis on social benefit and local providers when procuring goods and services.

Our Plans: We want to grow into our identity as a community mutual, thinking about the implications of this in greater depth – there are more details of what this might look like are included in Appendix E.

The one commitment we have already made in this regard is the development of an apprenticeship scheme, to provide routes into skilled employment for young people locally through Soha Response and other teams. Along with the examples above, this might include broadening the range of housing services we provide, to cater to those who are underserved by current market.

However, some of these changes are complex and come with a significant cost, so we want to work with members to think these options through carefully.

5| Resourcing and Accountability



People We have recently increased the capacity of our communities team to properly resource our ambitions, with two Engagement & Community Officers now working with our Resident Involvement Manager. Staff will receive ongoing training and support to ensure they can effectively engage with residents and the community.



Structures In addition to adding new roles, we have moved the Resident Involvement and Engagement team to sit alongside the Localities team, under the leadership of the Head of Communities. This is already helping these teams to work more closely, whilst enabling the Localities team to also handle neighbourhoods issues with greater focus.



Finances Partnerships with local organisations play a critical role in achieving our ambitions – and adequate funding is essential to support community projects, events, and initiatives. Budgets are allocated annually, with provisions for flexible funding to respond to emerging community needs. Financial oversight will ensure resources are used efficiently and transparently.



Monitoring the Action Plan Progress against the action plan and key performance indicators (KPIs) will be monitored quarterly by the Senior Leadership Team. The resident involvement and communities action plan will be a standing agenda item to be monitored at Members' Forum and the Board AGM. Locality Leads will agree monitoring arrangements for local projects with local members on their priority projects.

In addition, many of the objectives of the Communities Strategy align with both our Corporate Plan objectives, so will be managed through that process.

There will be an annual impact report on the outcome of resident involvement across Soha's service delivery.

Appendix A: *roles and responsibilities*

Residents are Soha's largest stakeholder group. Rental income is the largest proportion of Soha's revenue and is spent on high quality services, staffing and reinvested in existing and new homes. Soha is accountable and responsible to all residents (including shared owners and leaseholders) and has a culture of listening and responding well.

The Executive Team - have delegated power from the Board to deliver their approved plans. Staff are recruited and trained to live out our values and cultural principles.

The Board is responsible for the leadership and strategy of Soha. They have a stewardship role, holding in trust the charitable purpose of Soha.

Members set the Rules by which the Board works and have the right to make major decisions at the Annual General Meeting. Membership is open to all residents and staff who have been with us at least six months. Members are represented by a Members' Forum, whose terms of reference are included in Soha's Standing Orders.

Whilst we believe that membership gives you a unique opportunity not afforded to others to shape and influence Soha, there are plenty of ways to make a difference without being a member. All residents are welcome to attend the Members' Forum to observe a meeting and attend the Board AGM, although they will not be able to vote on decisions. Residents can also be a part of the decision-making process in other areas of our work - the only opportunity limited to members is becoming a representative of the Members' Forum.

Residents who choose not to become members receive exactly the same service as members.

Appendix B: previous communities strategy action plan tracker

Action Plan progress from Communities Strategy 2024

Strengthening Locality-Based Delivery and Culture of Continuous Learning

1| Foster a culture of constant learning and review of the localities service delivery model

Action	Progress Status and Next Steps
Full commitment from SLT to cross-locality “working together” days	Now a regular rhythm, helping the teams to work better together
Joint reviews with other teams to identify what helps staff feel connected	Monthly housing management meeting brings Community Leads and service managers together to identify and resolve issues
Monthly reflection and learning included in both managers’ and Locality Team meetings	Monthly reflective practice embedded in meetings
Identify engagement gaps and inform learning	We’ve not yet completed this - data analysis underway to highlight underrepresented groups

2| Improve structure and resident involvement in Locality Plans

Action	Progress
Community data and asset mapping	We have profiles developed for a number of neighbourhoods, and want to roll this out to map priorities, needs, community groups, partners and events in a wider range of communities
Action planning aligned to Corporate Plan objectives underway in several communities	Locality Plans are being shaped in line with corporate plan goals, including local priority-setting
Monthly newsletters and social media updates actively share local news and events	We have monthly locality newsletters which inform residents about what’s going on in their local area. We are delighted these have a higher readership rate than we anticipated, and allow us to communicate locally-relevant updates with residents in a low-cost way

3| Embed locality performance measures in existing reviews

Action	Progress
Community and formal engagement figures included in monthly Management Reports	Monthly reports now include engagement statistics - Resident Involvement Manager partners with Community Leads to plan about growing our reach

Engagement activity currently recorded via shared spreadsheets; planning transition to digital "Lists" for improved tracking	Looking to transition from spreadsheets to a digital tracking system. Digital tracking system ("Lists") in development to streamline reporting
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4| Set clear KPI targets and communicate them through a Localities Charter

Action	Progress
Each locality team has defined duty and working together days	Duty and working together days are now a regular part of how each locality team works
Teams regularly share success stories and learning across localities	Community Leads and Community Neighbourhood Officers share what's working well in weekly meetings, and join up with service managers on a monthly basis
Development of a 'Localities Charter' underway to define commitments, data use, and visibility expectations	Our Communities and Neighbourhood service standards explain what residents can expect from us and how we're performing against key performance indicators

5| Strengthen resident involvement and communication

Action	Progress
Community Networking Forums to be established in all localities by end of 2025 (per Corporate Plan 25/30)	Community Networking Forums are to be piloted; all to be in place by end of 2025
New communications approaches—e.g. newsletters, forums, and feedback loops—actively in use	We have reviewed the standard letters we send out, introduced locality newsletters and created greater clarity on our approach to online engagement. We are building on this as we review the impact of different forms of communication in the coming year

6| Empower community connectors and peer-led outreach

Action	Progress
Support and grow a resident-led Community Connector model	Initial Community Connector engagement was limited. We are seeking to learn the lessons from this and evolve our approach through local Community Networks
Resident-led surveys now inform Scrutiny Reviews, encouraging peer-to-peer consultation	Peer-driven consultation now informing Scrutiny Reviews

7| Embed the habit of storytelling and sharing community impact

Action	Progress
Success stories shared with the Communications Team and featured in monthly newsletters and the Annual Impact Report	Stories are now regularly shared with the Communications Team and featured in newsletters and the Resident Impact Report

8| Harness feedback from recent surveys to maintain engagement

Action	Progress
Feedback from 600+ survey respondents integrated into Community Plans	Over 600 responses incorporated into community mapping for each town or village. Community profiles will use the data and feedback from all surveys and other information available
Follow-up actions clearly communicated to residents to show how their views have shaped future plans	Clear follow-up communication demonstrates listening and action. This will be highlighted in the monthly newsletter and the Annual Impact Report

Resident Involvement Action Plan 24-25

1| Scrutiny Reviews

Action	Progress
Deliver two resident-led reviews leading to tangible service improvements by March 2025	The Scrutiny group carried out two reviews – one on locality-based working and another on communications, with a third review of home ownership underway

2| Members' Forum Participation in Corporate Plan 25/30

Action	Progress
Ensure meaningful resident involvement in shaping the long-term direction of the organisation.	Members' Forum representatives have taken part in strategy workshops and consultation events. Feedback has been incorporated into Corporate Plan priorities. Co-regulation representatives embedded across workstreams, including the new in-house repairs service

3| Resident Involvement in Policy and Strategy

Action	Progress
Strengthen co-regulation by embedding resident input into all strategic decisions.	- Members' Forum requested a clear 'Resident Involvement' section in all policy and strategy covering papers. - Portfolio Holders regularly attend Soha Response Board meetings. - Members' Forum receives updates on Soha Response and co-regulation involvement.

4| Disability Awareness and Action Group (DAAG)

Action	Progress
Maintain accountable and effective leadership within the group.	- DAAG elected a new Chair and Vice Chair in July 2024. - The group continues to act as a key consultation forum for service and policy changes affecting disabled residents. - Next election planned for July 2025.

5| Seniors Group

Action	Progress
Strengthen the link between the Seniors Group and Members' Forum to ensure older residents' voices are heard.	- Chair of Seniors Group provides regular updates to Members' Forum. - Staff are now regularly invited to attend Seniors Group meetings to share service updates and listen to resident feedback.

6| Engagement with Younger Residents

Action	Progress
Increase participation from residents aged 20-45, especially those underrepresented in formal involvement.	- Growing number of 20-40-year-olds engaged through locality team outreach. - Community Fund resident panel includes members under 45. - Engagement includes: - Drop-ins to community events (e.g. toddler groups) - Work with schools and targeted email surveys - Targeted door-knocking and digital locality meetings

Appendix C: Consultation activities and key themes

Resident Consultation for Soha's Communities Strategy

In designing the Communities Strategy, we have sought to engage with a range of residents, focusing on how they want to engage, what's working, and what needs improvement. We have offered to continue working with residents about the elements of the strategy which are of particular interest to them.

Consultation Approach

A mix of methods will be used to reach a diverse audience:

- Surveys/Sounding Board
- Focus groups (online/in-person)
- Pop-up events in communities
- One-to-one conversations (including door knocks)
- Social media polls

Key Themes and Questions:

1. [Resident Priorities](#) - What engagement means to residents and what areas matter most.
2. [Current Engagement](#) - What's working, what isn't, and past participation.
3. [Preferred Engagement Methods](#) - How residents want to be contacted and involved.
4. [Community Strengthening](#) - Ideas for local projects and inclusive engagement.
5. [Measuring Success](#) - What would show residents that their views are heard and acted on.

Date	Activity
March/April	Door Knocks - survey questions
March/April	Drop ins and 'pub' events - survey questions
March/April	Skip days - survey questions
May	Members' Forum - update on consultation process
May onwards	Door knocks - Short survey
May	Sounding Board - survey questions (longer survey)
May	Social Media - ask for feedback, possible poll based on feedback

We have had over 100 face-to-face consultations and 200 online survey responses.

Appendix D: Supporting policy

Soha has a Resident Involvement policy which accompanies this strategy, to encourage and support full participation, including travel, childcare and other carer expenses.

Soha provides training and experience to all involved residents so that they can give a well-informed, constructive input. The investment is also crucial to succession planning, building a pool of future resident leaders.

The Resident Involvement, Support and Incentives policy (SP25) can be found on the Soha website

Appendix E: Community Mutual – what it could look like

Theme	Traditional approach ('to')	Soha today	Growth ('for' and 'with')
Ownership & stewardship Who owns the organization and to what end?	Exists for benefit of shareholders, with 'customer' agreement for major changes not required; Homes are an asset	Soha staff steward the organisation, which is owned by members who have ultimate decision-making power	Growing a shared understanding of why Soha exists and using this to shape future ambitions
Transparency & accountability What access do residents have to information about services, performance and decisions?	Housing association gatekeeps information and communicates out to residents	Performance reports live on website; Regular communications across multiple formats	Growing areas residents have access to; strengthen link between what we hear from residents and what we communicate
Decision-making How do decisions get made and who gets to make them?	'Customers' receive decisions made on their behalf	Resident involvement and consultation in decision-making; Members vote on key decisions	Wider range of residents identifying issues, making decisions, creating solutions
Development What type, where, and how many new homes do we build?	Decisions made based on best return on investment given market conditions	Mixed portfolio, including Section 106 and Community Land Trusts partnerships	Greater community involvement in development aspirations, including where we build and who we work with
Finance How do we fund our home-building and services?	Money loaned from lenders offering the most favourable rates and conditions	Money loaned from lenders offering the most favourable rates and conditions	Money loaned from lenders who share our values; explore opportunities for crowdfunding

Theme	Traditional approach ('to')	Soha today	Growth ('for' and 'with')
Procurement & employment practice How we do we harness our spending power?	Value for money is paramount	Some social impact clauses in contract procurement	Greater emphasis on social benefit and the circular economy when procuring goods and services
Allocations Who is prioritised for Soha homes? How is this decided?	Prioritised based on housing need	Priority dictated by council partners for 75% of new lets; lead role in local NRPF & homelessness efforts	Much broader range of housing services, catering to those who are underserved by current market
Neighbourhoods & Communities As a landlord, how do we engage with residents at a local level?	Paternalistic relationship, landlord as enforcer; Possible goodwill donations to local causes	Strong local partnerships; funding has multiplier effect; clearer on boundaries of what we will/not get involved in, whilst seeking to create places to live	Respectful relationship with residents; holding partner orgs to account; catalysing change in partnership with residents and groups
Anchor local organisation How do we harness all our assets for the good of the communities we serve?	Role is to deliver services which look uniform across all operating areas	Strong reputation as employer locally; locality teams provide consistent staffing for residents	Employer of choice locally, developing recruitment pathways; services adapted to meet local need
Recruitment How we attract great people who share our values to join our team	Pay national recruitment consultants to find new staff members	Recruitment built around competency for the role and alignment with values and cultural principles	Incentive scheme for colleagues referring contacts to high-demand roles; Apprenticeship programme