**Value for Money Assessment**

**Background**

Housing for Women exists to provide housing and support services to women and their dependents in London, and especially those affected by domestic violence. We seek to enable the women whom we house and support to take back control of their lives and to live peacefully in a decent home, in a pleasant environment.

We are developing our ability to understand the impact that we have on our residents and supported housing clients and the efficiency and effectiveness of the services we deliver to them. Housing for Women is a small housing association with limited resources and we operate in challenging areas where demand for our services exceeds supply.

## Approach

The Housing for Women Board and the Executive Team (ET) aim to maximise the social value of the organisation by ensuring that its finance and resources are used effectively.

It is the role of the Board and ET to:

* Ensure the organisation’s assets and resources are used to further its charitable aims and ensure planned surpluses are achieved.
* To challenge business effectiveness and ensure it operates efficiently.
* To set the standards and targets against which performance is measured and ensure action is taken so that they are achieved.

## Strategy

* Agree a target surplus to provide an appropriate return on our assets for the benefit of current and future service users.
* Undertake active asset management to ensure that all accommodation is at the standard agreed by the Board and in order to advance our business objectives.
* Quantify and measure financial return, social value and impact in our provision of social and affordable housing, support services to vulnerable women and other value added activities.
* Reduction in overhead and back office costs including Administration, Human Resources, Finance & ICT and the Chief Executive’s Office.
* Set service standards across all operational areas.
* Maximise fundraising income for non-statutorily funded projects which benefit women and meet our charitable objects.
* Drive improvement in the Association’s performance and benchmark against other similar providers to ensure results are in the upper quartile.
* Evaluate the effectiveness of operational projects within the business to ensure that deemed benefits are achieved.

**Overall Performance**

Historically the Association has assessed its efficiency by comparing financial metrics against those of two other Housing Associations, namely Arhag Housing Association and Soho Housing Association.

In 2015/16 the Association joined Housemark in order to enable more representative benchmark data to be obtained. This remains the intention and this will be implemented during 2016/17. Additionally data available from the G320 benchmarking group is to be considered for some elements of our service provision.

For this year we have decided to review our performance with reference to the proposed sector scorecard that is being created by the Efficiency Working Group and has the backing of the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing.



Across the year work was completed in all areas of the Value for Money strategy. Of particular note was:

* Full analysis of the cost base and build-up of the 2016/17 budget from the bottom up.
* Maximising the volunteering opportunities across the Association ensuring both value and benefit gained effectively quantified.
* Implementation of a revised reward system for staff linked to the annual appraisal system to ensure pay increases deliver performance improvements.

### Supported housing services

The Association operates nine refuges for women escaping domestic violence in 3 London boroughs plus floating support services. The refuge services are supplemented by a children’s service which is funded by grants and donations.

The Association generates considerable additional value by fundraising for innovative projects to support a range of women who are at risk of violence including trafficked women, women ex-offenders and women involved in the criminal justice system. In 2016 we were successful in securing 5 year funding totalling £697,000 from the BIG Lottery for our new Re-Connect project for single women leaving prison with substance misuse support needs.

### Procurement and ICT

The procurement strategy sets out how services and goods are to be procured to achieve value for money. It also encourages the association to ensure value for money using quotes and tenders as the basis for ensuring the best value in all procurement of goods and services

In 2016/17 Housing for Women plan to bring further efficiencies via its ITC. A summary of planned work-streams are detailed below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Service Charge Module in Kypera | Service Charge information held in Kypera against all Units. Ability to produced detailed schedules for tenants as required. |
| Update Website including Live chat | Website with modern, fresh feel that can be easily updated directly by H4W officers. Facility for Customers to engage in live chat to be established. |
| Waiting list and transfer module in Kypera | All referrals and transfers managed through Kypera with the ability to fairly and equally assess each tenant on the basis of their current situation through a needs-based process. |
| Infrastructure review and investment | H4W will have a modern ITC infrastructure with the capacity to allow growth over the next 5 years; Upgrading all servers including Business Continuity Servers, and increased storage for back-up. |
| Review and implement Fixed Asset module | All H4W assets will be held in the best software solution enabling detailed component accounting. |
| Asbestos register in Kypera | Records of all units containing Asbestos in Kypera with clear details of the nature and location of asbestos with scoring against a matrix to assess the level of threat. |
| Mobile working – implementation of “Agile” | Maintenance and Housing officers are able to access and update records on Kypera whilst away from the office; e.g. out on site or in tenants homes, reducing travel time and enabling greater customer service. |
| Implement integrated HR/Payroll system | An integrated HR and Payroll system that will enable self-servicing for staff re; sickness, leave, training etc. |
| Planned Maintenance module in Kypera | All planned maintenance recorded in Kypera enabling more effective budget planning according to what major works need to be completed up to 30 years in to the future. |
| SMS from Kypera | Tenants can be advised and reminded about repairs, visits, events via text messages direct from Kypera |
| Resident Portal | Tenants able to report repairs, ASB, send pictures/evidence, check rent account balances and update details via the portal which will automatically update or trigger an action in Kypera. |

### Social return on investment

From 2015/16 the Association applied the HACT model to measure Social Impact and assign a monetary value to various aspects of our work and the outcomes produced by it. In 2014/15 volunteers gave us 3,330 hours of their time and in 2015/16 this almost doubled to 5,763 hours. Using the HACT model the social impact this produced in 2015/16 has a monetary value of £190,000. This is calculated using formulae to monetarise significant outcomes for those volunteers including access to employment and improved physical and mental health.

During 2016, we:

* Awarded 11 Tenant Training Grants (paying course fees for 5 tenants, laptop costs for a further 7 tenants and helping 4 tenants with travel costs)
* Arranged for a number of refuge service users and their children to take a short break, thanks to the Friends Of Housing for Women who fund-raised to pay for the trips
* Received a number of donations from individuals, sponsors and other organisations including Habitat for Humanity who decorated 2 of our refuges, saving us an estimated £3,000

For our older tenants, we:

* Made 78 home visits
* Supported 7 tenants to apply for grants for major aids and adaptations
* Held regular coffee mornings in Earls Court, Greenwich and Streatham aimed at improving inclusion and reducing isolation

Work to measure social impact across all areas of activity is in progress.

**VfM gains in the year**

During the year Housing for Women has focussed both on achieving cost savings within the procurement process and contract enhancement within the tender process.

The servicing and maintenance contract for commercial boiler plant at 3 sites was successfully re-tendered with a considerable saving on existing costs of almost 85%.

The servicing and maintenance contracts for our lifts were found to be inefficient with14 passenger lifts having 11 separate contracts with differing conditions and 6 different suppliers.  With our new contractor in place, we are transitioning these works over as and when the existing contracts expire, with a 10% saving on cost, expanded repairs inclusive element and more streamlined administrative approach.