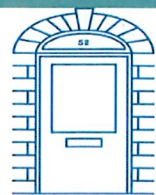


SMHA Strategic Plan 2022-25

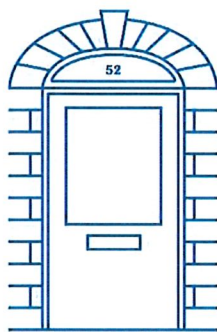
APRIL 2022

**St Matthews Housing Association
Authored by: CEx and Board**



St. Matthew's
Housing Association





St. Matthew's
Housing Association

Strategic Plan 2022-25

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STRENGTHS (+)



What strengths do we have and what do others find appealing?

- Dedicated, knowledgeable and experienced staff and Board
- Strong community ethos and excellent reputation locally
- Respected by peers



WEAKNESSES (-)



Are there any competency deficits we might have?

- Small with limited resources
- Limited for growth potential by our geography
- Recruiting and retaining key skillsets long into the future



OPPORTUNITIES (+)



What is the climate within our market?

- Growth potential – several key strategic sites for acquisition and development
- Partnership working with other HAs for economies of scale and key support
- Current economic and low interest rate climate

THREATS (-)



Any hazards to limit our potential?

- Sectoral Competition
- Lack of government and key political decision making
- Business complacency

Our Business

What we do

St. Matthews Housing Association (SMHA) is based in Belfast and currently owns 207 homes (April 2022) – increasing our units by almost 20% under the tenure of our current Chief Executive and Board since April 2010. We provide housing consisting of general family housing, single adult housing and active elderly housing to our residents mainly in Short Strand and also in Clonard and Poleglass.

The Association is registered with the Department for Communities – the regulating body from which we receive capital funding for our property development programme. This funding is augmented by private finance to cover the full cost of provision of new assets. Our annual revenue funding is obtained from rent and service charges.

The Association has important development aspirations within the Short Strand where we principally operate. There remains the potential for development opportunities in the short to medium term and the Association is best placed to share in this through strategic partnerships.

Our Plan

What we will do

Our Plan outlines some strategic themes which will link to business plan objectives of what we will do over the next three years. The plan allows us to focus on what's important for our business and the linking of the measurable objectives of our annual Business Plan will help us ensure we work towards common goals set out in the plan.

Our Plan has been drawn up in consultation with our Board and all staff. Our three-year priorities will run through all aspects of business planning, risk planning, staff appraisal and development during this period and will help us grow and improve our business.

Below is a summary of the main body of the plan where over the next 3 years we will:-

- Grow our stock base through development and acquisitions – by as much as potentially 130 units and substantially increase our turnover.
- Improve and invest in our existing stock – over £0.5m of stock component replacement.
- Continue to guide our operation with an experienced and able Board and staff base – training and developing them and successfully succession planning.
- Maintain highest compliance standards with our regulators.
- Meet all our banking lending covenants.
- Maintain our excellent service standards, achieve value for money and support our local community.

We have achieved good things in the past 12 years under the current SMHA leadership and there remains an exciting opportunity to continue to be successful and make a difference in our community.

Our Vision, Mission and Values

St. Matthews Housing Association Ltd.

Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Our Vision

Striving for excellence as a community-based housing association in Ireland

Mission Statement

Quality, affordable housing locally

Values

Community

Quality

Reliable

Trust

Tenant Focus

Professional

Our Performance

What we have achieved

St. Matthews Housing Association (SMHA) specifically under the current Board and Chief Executive has achieved the following in the last twelve years:

- The development and delivery of 43 new homes in Short Strand and the prospect of delivering even more
- Increased annual income from £581k to over £1m and our housing assets from £14.9m to £19m
- Invested over £2.5m in our assets through our housing maintenance programmes
- Achieved over 90% of business plan tasks annually
- Recruited and retained a small but highly knowledgeable and qualified staff base with structured appraisal and training programmes in place

We have achieved this during a period when we had to deal with:-

- Initial negative DfC regulatory rating have transformed into regular and consistent "Satisfactory" rating across the board in regulation affecting every part of our work
- Difficulties emanating from the 2008 financial crash banking and financial sectors and the continuing challenging economic environment
- Inability to pursue to development projects ourselves but through strategic partnerships with larger housing associations

Our Environment

Factors influencing Our Plan

Currently the Association operates in a complex environment where the challenges are varied.

Political – we have worked well to influence members of the local NI Executive politically over matters local. As a small community based entity we remain vulnerable to political change in housing policy, particularly any moves to rationalise and generate greater efficiency. Cost of living and tightening welfare reforms remain a big issue for the sector and for SMHA. As an efficiently run, low debt housing association with lower rents than many others we remain well placed to deal with the challenges. The Association maintains a vision to have one social landlord for all social housing in Short Strand through possible future stock transfers from NIHE. We acknowledge this remains a longer-term aspiration but the changing environment for NIHE has the potential for this vision to be realised.

Economic – the recent low inflationary and even recessionary years presented potential difficulties in obtaining loan finance and availing of deposit interest. However, it can still present affordable development opportunities and the Association needs to be best placed to avail of these. Very recent inflationary pressures emerging from the pandemic period, are impacting on our tenants' living costs and may impact on our income collection. Housing need remains high and development potential in several sites remains viable - therefore continued efficient control of our management and maintenance costs will position us well to preserve a good financial foundation which can take advantage of future opportunities.

Social – general population growth and an increase in smaller households present particular problems going forward in our area of limited development capacity and high demand. The greater complexity and degree of problems within society present a unique challenge to any social housing provider, particularly one that has worked for many years with housing on sectarian interfaces and with deprivation and disadvantage. Expectations of tenants are high and are changing and it is critical the Association secures and retains a skilled and dedicated staff.

Technological – the Association's response to opportunities afforded by technological advancement remains important to our success. Continuing investment in IT, adoption of VOIP telephony systems as well maximising the usage of our Omniledger software will help facilitate success. The Association is and will remain GDPR compliant and IT security remains a large focus.

Business Improvement – The Association is committed to continuous improvement of our business model. The Association focus continues on improving our business model to ensure full compliance with the DfC audit standards to improve beyond the satisfactory/acceptable level.

Internal Capacity – SMHA Board and management will continue to examine and improve our internal capacity to align our structure to put us in the best place to deliver our business objectives for the future sustainability of the Association.

Our Future

How we go forward

Over the last twelve years the current Board and Chief Executive have invested a lot of time and effort to improve our governance and make stronger our business model. We have progressed positively through regulation and perform as well any other small housing association.

We have invested greatly in our housing stock and our recent stock condition survey confirmed our stock base is in good condition and long-term stock plans are affordable. We have grown modestly and there remains a strong potential to increase the size of our stock assets by upwards of 50% in the medium to longer term. We can do this with strong strategic partnerships and by tapping into the favourable loan finance available to prudent models such as us.

Beyond aspirations to grow and meet the strong need within the Short Strand our focus remains on providing our tenants with a responsive service, staffed by a knowledgeable and experienced staff base and getting better as a business and service. Succession planning and developing robust organisational structures are vital in our planning for the coming years.

Thus, this plan is developed by seeking to achieve measurable results within the following strategic areas.

Objectives for the next 3 years from April 2022

1. FINANCE AND ECONOMIC

1.1 Secure appropriate funding and consolidate income streams to maintain and expand services

- Increase stock numbers (April 2022 - 207) by further circa 130 units in 2022/25 period
- Maximise income collection – Collect >99% of all charges due annually
- Secure housing association grant and private finance to deliver our social housing development aspirations (*it is hoped around 130 additional units from April 2022 baseline in management or on-site by March 2025*)

1.2 Achieve and demonstrate value for money

- Maintain affordable rents demonstrated by equitably benchmarking against other housing associations on an annual basis
- >85% of tenants to rate landlord service as value for money as tested in our biennial tenant satisfaction survey
- Maintain effective response maintenance service through appropriate contractual arrangements and maintain best value in maintenance generally
- Work with HA5 partners to procure best value maintenance contractor and consultant options to deliver objectives from 2021/22 stock condition annually

1.3 Effective and efficient management of financial resources

- Effective arrears management processes – achieve and regularly maintain arrears performance at less than 5% of total rent receivable
- Continue effective control of costs of managing housing service
- Effective treasury management to obtain best value for monies invested

2. INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

2.1 Effective Board

- Board approved effective 3-yearly Strategic Plan and annual Business Plan in place
- Complete 100% Board appraisal process annually
- Conduct Board members survey annually
- Achieving 100% Board renewal by recruiting key skills to augment Board's overall experience by advertising and possibly targeting professional bodies for suitably skilled potential members

2.2 Skilled staff

- Manage and retain appropriately skilled staff ensuring 100% retention of staff over the next 3 years
- Review staffing needs for preparedness and to embrace the growth we hope to achieve
- Motivate, value and challenge staff and evidence through annual staff appraisal process for all staff and reward staff competitively – 100%
- Resource effective training opportunities linked to attaining key performance indicators – meet 100% of annual staff training plan objectives
- To ensure each leaving staff member is given the opportunity to offer their opinions via an exit interview
- To offer all new staff a comprehensive induction at time of employment

3.3 Effective succession planning

- Achieve excellent board and staff retention over next three years 100%
- Always ensure good dexterity amongst staff (100%) to ensure good cover for all roles in all eventualities
- Competitively benchmark salaries and conditions and reward staff for their role – once in the three-year cycle

3. REGULATORY AND EXTERNAL

3.1 Maintain regulatory compliance

- Compliance with regulatory requirements by ensuring that at least a “Satisfactory” rating is obtained through annual DfC regulatory assessment
- Submit annual return to Charity Commission and comply with the charity regulations
- To continue to monitor and deliver on our Equality Scheme action plan and Disability Action plan – and to complete the annual Equality Return
- To comply with FRS requirements as a registered housing association and Industrial and Provident Society and complete the annual return

3.2 Dealing with External Factors

- Manage our business well and regularly review our Risk Plan (4 times annually F&P sub-committee and twice-yearly Board) to minimise impact of potential external threats
- Annually revisit and regularly review our Disaster Recovery arrangements and plan to minimise impact of potential external threats and unplanned for events
- Board, CEx and staff to network effectively with stakeholders, peers and influencers to ensure SMHA is best placed to deal with any eventuality

3. SERVICE

3.1 Deliver quality, responsive and effective services

- Facilitate participation of key stakeholders in the development and delivery of services
- Maintain and develop effective partnerships with local resident groups, statutory agencies and voluntary agencies

3.2 Effective management of Association's core functions of Housing Management, Maintenance, Development, Governance and Finance

- Manage risk effectively through proper risk assessment and maintaining the Association's Risk Plan by twice yearly review by Board
- Promote effective management information systems to monitor performance and ensure effective continuous improvement
- Promote effective and inclusive internal and external communication ensuring at least 1 annual report is circulated to all stakeholders each year, 1 Spring Newsletter each year and 1 residents survey conducted once every two years
- Ensure all policies are reviewed prior to recorded review dates (100%)

3.3 Support our communities and tenant financial inclusion

- Commit to devoting 1% of annual turnover to measures supporting community activity and financial inclusion
- Continue to develop support for appropriate community activities with annual grants/bursaries
- Address financial exclusion in savings/loans services by publicising and taking forward matched savings credit union scheme for all SMHA tenants not currently a credit union member

5. PROPERTY GROWTH AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 Expand existing social housing base

- Attain annual growth in property base of 130 units, effectively achieving around 60% increase in 2022 baseline stock levels by March 2025
- Make best of use of key partnerships (e.g. APEX, HA5) to achieve quality product and efficient delivery in order to achieve efficiencies required by DfC in the delivery of social housing
- Ensure all new social housing provision is HA Guide compliant and achieves at least an “satisfactory” rating during the DfC annual regulatory assessment
- Progress vision for Translink Bus Depot for community usage and one social landlord locally for all social housing in Short Strand through potential stock transfer schemes

5.2 Improve existing stock condition

- Complete planned maintenance objectives and improvement works annually as outlined in Stock Condition Survey 2021/22 during the 3-year cycle of Plan
- Develop future planned maintenance objectives through stock investment strategy to ensure continued compliance with Decent Homes Standard
- Annually produce five year and 30 year rolling costed life cycle replacement plans as part of annual Business Planning process
- Maintain properly procured and efficiently managed term contract arrangements for planned, cyclical and response maintenance needs

5.3 Achieve and demonstrate effective housing management

- Complete 90% of adaptations within agreed timescales and ensure 100% of properties have Energy Performance Assessments in place
- >85% of tenants to rate overall housing service as either good or very good in our biennial tenant satisfaction survey
- Effective management of voids (less than 0.5% annually)
- Effective allocations and lettings from Common Waiting List source (<45 days average relet time)

- Effective management of anti-social behaviour (100% of all ASB complaints recorded on register and resolved)
- Effective management of complaints over service (100% of complaints recorded on register and resolved)
- 100% of properties to have 5 yearly PIR electrical certification in place and annual gas safety certificate in place