



*“Working Together Towards A Better Place To Live”*

## **ASHTON PIONEER HOMES – COMPANY PROFILE**

### 1. Company Status

Ashton Pioneer Homes is a not for profit limited company incorporated under the Companies Act 1985, on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1997. It is a Company limited by guarantee without share capital.

Ashton Pioneer Homes is a Local Housing Company, as created by the Housing Act 1996, specifically to accept the transfer of ex-Local Authority stock. It is entirely independent and is freestanding of any other Housing Association.

Ashton Pioneer Homes is a Registered Social Landlord with the Housing Corporation.

### 2. The Board

The Board, who are also responsible for monitoring the Company’s performance against its Business Plan targets, sets the Company’s policies and strategies. The Board comprises 15 Directors, and follows a standard Local Housing Company model of 5 council nominees, 5 independents and 5 tenants. The Board members of Ashton Pioneer Homes and its non-registered development subsidiary, APH Developments Limited, contribute a wide range of experience and skills to enable them to oversee the complexities of running a diverse business.

The current Chair of the Board is Warren Bray, a council nominee who is also local ward councillor. Elections for the Chair take place annually following the Company’s Annual General Meeting at which a third of members are required to retire.

### 3. Tenant Focus

It has always been the intention of the Company to be very tenant focused. Local Housing Companies owe their very existence to tenants voting to create such organisations. In APH’s case, its existence was achieved through 64% of tenants voting in favour of transfer from Tameside MBC on a 74% turnout back in April 1998.

We therefore owed it to those tenants that we work with them to deliver the improvements in both property and services that were promised at the time

of ballot. This meant talking and listening to tenants both individually and collectively and supporting effective consultation and participation through our tenant involvement. It continues to mean the ongoing close participation of our Tenant Directors at Board level. There is a constant requirement to keep tenants properly informed about new developments, service improvements, neighbourhood and estate issues and the significant programme of property, estate, neighbourhood and community investment.

In 2005 we completed our second Tenant Satisfaction Survey and we are very proud of the responses from our residents:

- ✓ 91% satisfaction with their accommodation
- ✓ 85% satisfaction with APH services as their landlord
- ✓ 87% satisfaction with the repairs service
- ✓ 95% satisfaction with our repairs personnel
- ✓ 88% are satisfaction with the general condition of their home
- ✓ 86% satisfaction with how APH keeps them informed
- ✓ 78% that APH represents good value for money

These results place APH in the top 10% or 20% of RSL's for each category, delivering quality stock and services which are appreciated by our customers.

However, despite these excellent results, APH will seek to continuously improve the quality and range of its offer to tenants and the regeneration of our neighbourhoods.

#### 4. Funding

The transfer was funded under round one of the Estates Renewal Challenge Fund (ERCF) programme, with a grant of £8.8 m comprising £3.3m in pre-ballot works, and a dowry of £5.5 m, representing the negative value of the stock at transfer. We currently have a funding facility of £11m with Nationwide Building Society, which gives us a viable 30-year Business Plan.

#### 5. The Stock

We are a local Housing Association with some 900 homes. Our stock is situated in the St. Peter's ward of Ashton-u-Lyne, centred on the Richmond Park and West Park neighbourhoods, close to Ashton town centre and its facilities.

It comprises maisonettes, seven multi-storey apartment blocks, together with a large portfolio of houses, flats and bungalows, which have been supplemented through the development of further new-build family housing since transfer.

The stock profile currently comprises the following:

|                     |       |     |
|---------------------|-------|-----|
| Flats:              | 1 bed | 133 |
|                     | 2 bed | 22  |
| Multi-Storey Flats: | 1 bed | 165 |
|                     | 2 bed | 339 |
| Maisonettes:        |       | 76  |
| Houses:             | 2 bed | 49  |
|                     | 3 bed | 88  |
|                     | 4 bed | 22  |
|                     | 5 bed | 3   |

## 6. Rent Levels

The average rent for all our stock is £51.46p per week (June 2006). Low affordable rents are a key aim of the Company, given the proportion of our tenants who are working and the relatively low wage economy locally.

As a Housing Association, APH is working towards the achievement of target rents across its stock by 2012 and has therefore adopted an annual rent increase policy of RPI plus 0.5%. This is however influenced by the Government's rent re-structuring regime which means that rents on individual property types may be subject to an adjustment factor to achieve target rents by the Government's deadline.

## 7. Decent Homes Programme

At the time of transfer back in 1999, APH made a series of pledges to its tenants on the investment and service improvements it would deliver in the first five years of its operation.

Ahead of programme, in 2004, APH achieved all the five-year improvement promises made to our tenants at the time of transfer from Tameside Council. At that time, we also achieved full compliance with the Decent Homes Standard across our homes.

The improvements we have made, valued at over £12m, included:

- New kitchens, bathrooms, central heating and re-wiring to all properties, and replacement windows where required
- Internal redecoration of all communal areas in our high rise flats
- Re-roofing and improvements to the fabric and appearance of maisonettes
- Significant environmental improvements to improve the attractiveness of all our communal areas
- The installation of an extensive CCTV Concierge System and Security Service
- The establishment of 24 hour Estate Services for tenants

The priorities in this programme were at all stages agreed with tenants and ensured that all parts of the estate received some benefit in the first year.

The Association also built on the initial catch up repairs programme by establishing a comprehensive Asset Management strategy incorporating an updated stock condition survey during 2005.

This has informed the ongoing planned and responsive maintenance programmes at both strategic and operational levels.

## 8. Staffing

APH now employs 35 staff across its range of Housing and Customer Services Teams, Neighbourhood & Estate Services, Finance and Maintenance. Our Neighbourhood Services Assistants provide a 24-hour per day 7 days per week CCTV, security and estate care service. We value our staff; we have introduced a competency framework linked to our Investors in People accreditation and invest heavily in staff training and development.

## 9. Award Winning Organisation

We are very proud of the achievements made and the quality of the work and services we provide. To recognise the high standards we set and deliver for our customers and partners several awards have been achieved. Most notable of these are the two National Housing awards achieved by the company as well as reaching the national final in 2004. We have also achieved recognition linked to a number of areas of our activity...



APH originally achieved the Investors in People Award in 2000/2001 and was again successfully accredited under the new profiling framework in 2004 for our work on developing and training our staff. A further profiling review will be carried out in 2006.



Awarded for excellence

We were proud to receive a Charter Mark award, This recognition is awarded by the Government for organisations achieving "excellence in public services".

In the Charter Mark Report on APH they said:

*"Your staff are enthusiastic and are keen to provide a high level of service"*

*"The independent judging panel is satisfied that you provide exceptionally high quality services"*

APH will be carrying out the three year review of its Charter Mark status during 2006.



To support the continued diversification of its stock, APH has continued to benefit from ADP funding for the provision of large family housing.

To support the bids for new-build family housing, APH has secured Construction Clients' Charter status.

In addition we have received a host of other awards including Small Business of the Year, Estates in Bloom and Environmental awards and the RTPI Best Community Planning Award for our work with the community on our major estate environmental schemes.

10. Housing Corporation Assessment (HCA)

APH places a high regard on its independence and its ability to offer effective and efficient services to its current and future customers. The company therefore ensures its full compliance with the appropriate regulatory framework and is pleased to have green lights on all elements of its HCA. This confirms the Regulator's view of APH as...

*"Viable, Properly Governed, Properly Managed and a Good Performing Developer"*

11. iN Business for Neighbourhoods

As the leading community based Housing Association in Tameside, APH welcomed the framework offered by the NHF sponsored initiative, iN Business for Neighbourhoods.

APH secured early adopter status and as an organisation at the centre of our community, has continued to work with others to facilitate, sponsor, promote, partner and deliver across a wide ranging neighbourhood and community agenda. Most recent examples of these being the delivery of the Street Pride initiative and our partnership work on a Tameside Home Services community enterprise.



*Further details are available from Ashton Pioneer Homes*

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