

# Annual Report from the Chair

## Chief Executive Officer

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 we welcomed Jean Gray as our new CEO. Jean has 27 years' experience in the housing sector across housing, assets, care and development. She has been a breath of fresh air to us all and has steered us through embedding some necessary improvements in the organisation which were highlighted to the Scottish Housing Regulator. We had to take urgent action to improve our sense of corporate responsibility and understanding and Jean has been a source of inspiration and energy throughout this process. I am pleased to be able to report that a recent review by our internal auditors concluded that our governance is now strong.

## Strategic Plan

It is important that we have a vision and an understanding of our strategic direction. It was clear that this was the start of a new era and there was a need for an updated Strategic Plan, with links into business planning, strategic objectives and individual department plans. Our objectives are all interdependent with an overriding priority to ensure that our current properties and care homes are fit for purpose. The production of the plan has brought a new focus to the whole organisation, given each team clear direction and is intended to ensure that there is a corporate ownership throughout the whole organisation of what we need to achieve; what needs to be delivered whilst maintaining a customer focus. The current Strategic Plan, which is available on our website, sets out the objectives for this year with an indication of our intentions going forward. Following a recent Board Away day we are now considering the vision and strategic direction for Viewpoint from 2021 – 2024. The new Strategic Plan will be discussed and approved by March 2021 for publication by the start of the next financial year on the 1 April.

## Organisational Design Project

On her arrival the CEO took some time to review Viewpoint and consider where we could be more efficient and effective. Early on there was a recognition that as an organisation we needed to be more customer focussed, deliver on our promises and improve on our communication. High quality staff are an essential part of the ongoing success of the organisation and the range of services it delivers.

During 2019/20 we embarked on an organisational design project, led by the CEO. This enabled us to review our current team structures and consider the best way forward to deliver our services in our communities, with our tenants and residents at the core of what we do. This has meant change, we have brought some key functions back into the organisation like HR and Tenant Participation and the process is ongoing. Unfortunately due to the pandemic this process has been delayed but I am pleased to say this has now restarted. This process has brought our staff together, given them clarity around their roles

and responsibilities, and identified some significant gaps which are now being filled. The executive and the staff teams are working together in a way that did not happen before, with great results, and as this process continues we should see more positive results in the next few years.

### **Tenant Participation**

This is a significant area of importance for Viewpoint, tenant involvement plays an important part in formulating and agreeing the Association's aims and objectives. We can only improve what we do if we listen to our tenants and communicate with them effectively. With the recruitment of our new Tenant Participation and Communication Co-ordinator during the past year we have managed to:

- implement Year 1 of the Tenant Participation Strategy which was approved in November 2018.
- hold a successful Annual Tenants' Conference in June 2019 attended by over 80 tenants
- set up the Lothian Tenants Group and the Fife Tenants Forum whilst still interacting with other tenant groups

The tenant groups are the representative bodies for all our tenants and are recognised by the board and the Scottish Housing Regulator. We also collate ongoing information from our residents and their families' and consider their feedback in how we improve our services in the care homes.

Unfortunately our plan to proceed with a number of events and meetings this year hasn't progressed well due to the arrival of Covid-19. Although we would like to acknowledge the ongoing work of Heather, our TP Co-ordinator who has worked tirelessly to communicate regularly with many of our tenants at this difficult time. However as a Board we are pleased with the progress of the strategy and especially the ongoing involvement of tenants in a number of consultations and tenant scrutiny. We remain positive that we can start to get back on track with Year 2 of our strategy soon.

### **Care Homes and Housing Support**

Viewpoint are fortunate that in a challenging sector our three care homes are still in high demand. They are regularly inspected and all are rated 5 by the Care Inspectorate, and even though the Covid pandemic has put a tremendous strain on all care home staff we have retained our extremely high standards and ensured that the health, well-being and safety of our residents has remained the main priority.

As well as our care homes we also provide housing support and care @home to our tenants across our area. Many of these staff work in isolation yet continually we get very positive feedback from tenants about the care and support they receive and how important it is to

them in their home especially as many are older and vulnerable and do not have families of their own.

These staff and the Care Home staff, in fact all our staff, have shown outstanding resilience and performed over and above the call of duty during this ongoing pandemic, they have been amazing in their dedication to our tenants and residents, and wherever possible in keeping them safe.

### **Operational Activities**

There has been a real focus in improving performance particularly around voids. It isn't only about how quickly we turn empty properties around but also about our relet standard. In the last year not only did Housing & Assets improve the performance but also agreed a new relet standard which we know has been well received by tenants.

The teams remain focussed on dealing with arrears, managing complaints, delivering a repairs and maintenance service and improving satisfaction. These are all areas which as a Board we continue to monitor and know that as an organisation we remain focussed on continuing to improve the services we deliver to our customers.

There is more detail of the operational performance within the Annual Report & Financial Statements which highlights the ongoing good work that is being done.

### **Future Plans**

The Covid pandemic has prevented us from really getting on with the delivery of our services so far this year. The planned major work investment required to improve our buildings was sadly postponed although some external projects have now started, albeit within the parameters of the Government guidance. We promised to invest £5m in our stock this year so clearly this is not the case but as a Board we remain positive that we will be able to roll this investment forward.

We must continue to ensure Viewpoint operates within a sound financial framework, protecting our long term viability whilst making sure we continue to meet existing commitments as well as considering new opportunities

The pandemic has raised a lot of concerns and as the governing body for Viewpoint In the next few months we will be deciding what the longer term future is for our housing stock, and how we implement what is necessary to meet the first phase of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing. What will be more challenging for Viewpoint is how we meet those future demands considering the age and profile of our stock.

I have already alluded to some of our future plans but going forward we will continue to improve the services we deliver, review our targets and improve performance. We are also keen to provide more online services so that our customers can contact us at a time and in a way that suits them and that may also mean helping our tenants and residents to become

digitally connected. As the Chair, Viewpoint has been and will continue to be on a journey, a journey that aligns with our values and that will bring change. The last year has shown that we embrace change for the benefit of not only the organisation but to improve our services. To conclude I feel I must mention the last 6 months, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a phenomenal effect on the economy, on services, on families and on many of us and how we work and live on a daily basis. The resilience, tenacity and unselfishness of Viewpoint staff has shown that we can manage in a crisis; ensure our tenants and residents are supported and continue to deliver services. As we consider lessons learnt from the pandemic we are preparing to move forward and hopefully get the opportunity to start to deliver the promises we made in the strategic plan.

Thankyou

Iain Thompson, Chair of Viewpoint Board