



The Eldonian Village, Liverpool



Location
Liverpool

Founded
1989

Legal structure
Community Benefit Society

Description of activity
Housing provision

Key assets
382 homes over three sites

Staff and volunteers
Eleven staff members – four live in the local community. Volunteers provide a total of 10 hours per week.

Overview

The association is a community-based housing association registered with the Register of Friendly Societies as a Community Benefit Society and regulated as a housing association by Homes England and the Regulator for Social Housing. The Eldonian Community-based Housing Association Ltd was set up as a housing co-operative in 1983 by tenants. In 1990, the co-operative became a community-based housing association. The association is also a member of the National Housing Federation. The association differs from most registered providers of housing as it grew from a housing co-operative and as a result retained within its rules one which states that the majority of the governing body (the board) must be made up of tenants of the association. The board is elected by members of the association and every tenant has a right to apply to become a member of the association. Members also have a right to put themselves forward for election to the board, these elections take place at the AGM every year.

Being a community-based housing association brings with it a number of freedoms. Within this model the community are able to drive the agenda and enable the organisation to react quickly and in a timely manner to concerns. Moreover, being a small organisation removes the need for time-consuming bureaucratic processes again enabling the organisation to function effectively and not become commercialised and directed by government agendas.

The village provides security and safety and a high-quality of life for its tenants. Housing stock is well maintained and of good quality, providing a range of different housing options from flats through to sheltered housing and home nursing care.



Short summary statement on its financial health

The financial health of the organisation is very good. Since its inception in 1990 the organisation has made a surplus and this has continued year on year. Looking to the future there are no financial challenges expected.

Financial sustainability

Revenue is regular and predictable with the assets revenue able to cover its full costs. Currently the organisation is able to fund ongoing maintenance and improvement. Rents and service charges provide the main income. The organisation has seen an increase in its surplus over the last year despite adhering to the government guidelines for a one per cent rent reduction. April 2020 sees the lifting of this and the organisation is planning to increase rents. Please also add a line space after 'rents'. Despite the organisation making a surplus for the past 18 years, there is a keen drive to ensure value for money, which the organisation has been working towards, and implementing changes – *“questioning every bill, every contract, seeing if we can reduce costs”*. The small staff team and on site management has enabled management costs to be kept low in line with the value for money ethos of the organisation. *“Our organisation is easier to run than most housing associations because we are on site, no geographical spread.”* Voids are kept to a minimum and this is helped by the high demand for housing on its sites. Finance over the next five years is secure but it is preparing for a reduction in surplus. This will be determined by the outcome of the Stock Condition Survey being currently undertaken together with planned maintenance and repairs. Building new housing stock is a priority and will require both a contribution from reserves and the securing of finance and this will be under review and closely managed throughout the process. Despite having a small team of staff, staffing costs are the largest expenditure and are not expected to increase in the near future.

Challenges to the future sustainability of the organisation may result from the voluntary Right to Buy scheme in terms of reduced rental revenue. This has been considered and management plans are in place *“selecting the type of properties that people can buy ... we can manage it to a degree ... setting target figures so we will only allow X amount per year.”*

Moreover, the Right to Buy raises additional concerns of stock replacement as affordable local land is scarce. Implications from the transfer of tenants on to Universal Credit are a slight worry given the national trend of increased rent arrears, however, currently there has

been no indication of negative impacts. Money has been allocated in the budget for an additional part-time staff member to manage this should the need arise.

The members

Members are drawn predominantly from tenants. Currently there are six tenant board members, with three non-tenants invited to enhance knowledge, expertise and experience. This is mainly around governance, finance and community development. Discussion about future planning and everyday management decisions are made by the board, with the support of the staff team which reports regularly and brings additional guidance and advice on feasibility where necessary. *“Board members decide on policy, they decide on targets, monitor for governance.”* The relationship between staff and board is complimentary, creating a sense of mutual respect. This enables decision-making to be inclusive and knowledge based.

Despite the strong partnership between staff and board, succession planning is of concern. Existing members of the board are predominantly older and it is proving a challenge to attract and encourage younger tenants to become involved due to time pressures and other commitments. It is hoped that the addition of a board member with community development skills may be able to help address this worry. The ageing of some staff is also of concern, particularly the danger of losing a wealth of knowledge. Reliance on a small staff team increases the probability that essential skills will be lost without being replaced or passed on.

Community identity

Embedded community pride and strong familial and generational ties help to perpetuate community cohesion in the area. There is a strong sense of belonging for those already living in the area and extended family networks contribute to a high demand for housing from both within and outside the community. The organisation also encourages up- and down-sizing to enable families to remain in the village. Being able to offer a range of different housing options such as houses, flats, bungalows, sheltered accommodation, over 55's and a nursing home helps to keep families together and enables people to live in the community for longer – *“that is something we are proud of”, “It's keeping our elderly where they want to be”*. As demand for all types of housing is high, void rates are low, enabling loss of rental income to be kept to a minimum.



Reducing crime and increasing community safety are high on the agenda as a way of enhancing well-being in the village. Moreover, being a small organisation, the community are comfortable approaching the organisation and passing on concerns about crime or anti-social behaviour and keeping an eye on neighbours. The organisation has contributed to the police to cover the cost of additional patrols by police or Police Community Support Officers.

Family networks, coupled with a feeling of safety and security, contributes to the quality of life for tenants and this is an important consideration for the organisation. Donations to the Charitable Trust has helped to fund social activities for the community, for example, Easter and Summer holiday activities and a pensioners party, all adding to improvements in wellbeing and tenant satisfaction. Additionally, local people are employed wherever possible, again fostering a sense of community and belonging.

One possible challenge for the organisation is managing community expectations. There are requests from time to time for things that it is just not able to do and this is well managed.

Future direction:

Addressing some of the concerns regarding the Right to Buy, the roll out of Universal Credit and the results from the Stock Condition Survey will inevitably drive the future plans for the organisation. Although management and contingency plans are in place, the future is still unknown to some degree. It is expected that surpluses will reduce and the organisation will borrow more as planned expansion goes ahead particularly addressing the gap in housing provision for 18-40 year old single people. Having considered all these issues the organisation is confident it will remain financially stable.

Financial information

The following table provides an overview of The Eldonians Village income, expenditure and assets for the year ending 31st March 2018.

Income	£1,993,446
Expenditure	£1,236,315
Difference between income and expenditure	£757,131
Surplus/deficit on ordinary activities before taxation	£621,381
Annual income from grant or subsidy	Not available
Fixed assets	£17,449,423
Current assets (Debtors; cash at bank and in hand)	£2,343,194
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	£14,301,422
Total	£19,259,555
Net assets	£4,958,327