

Plymouth Community Homes

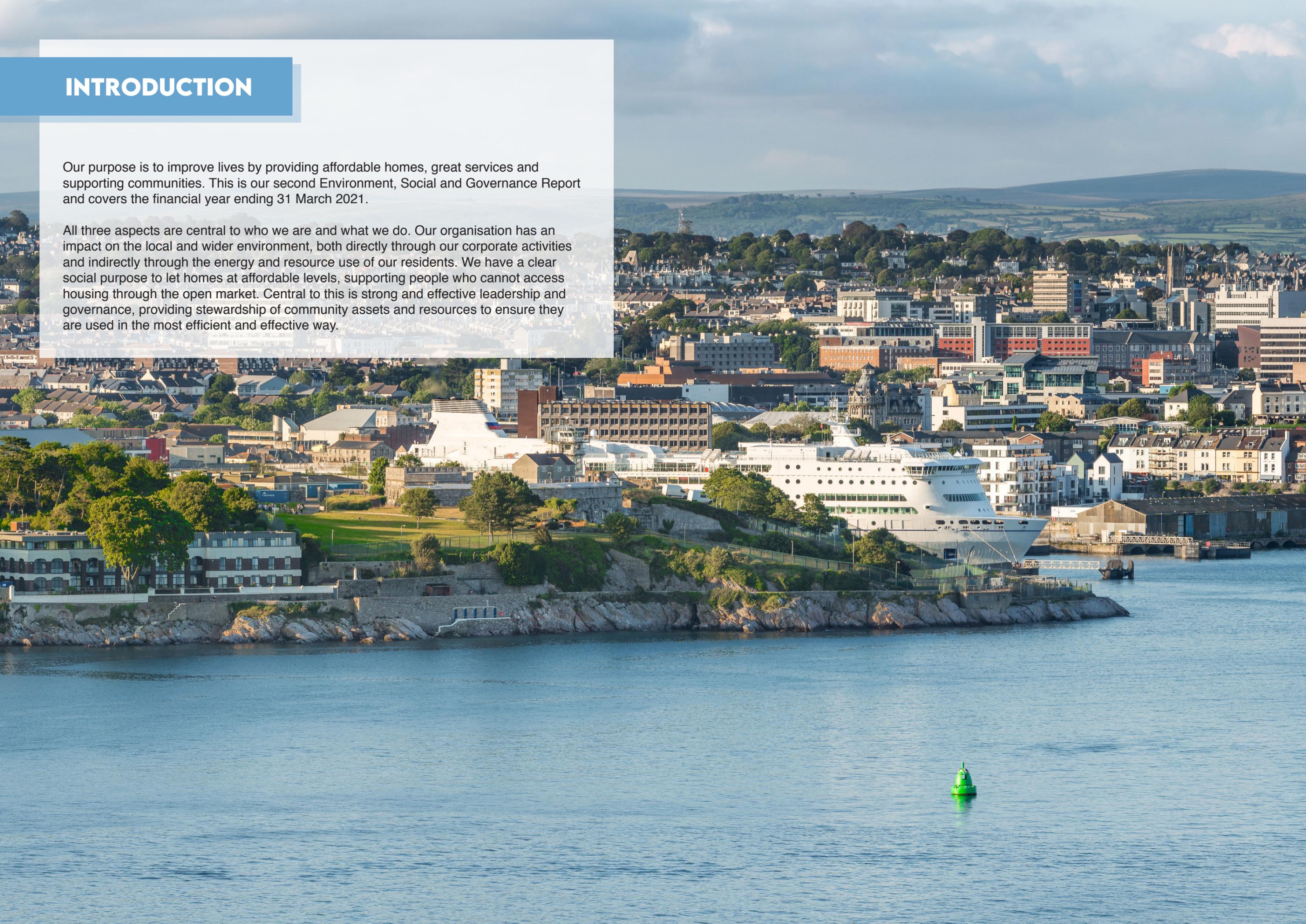
2020-21 Environmental, Social and Governance Report Summary



INTRODUCTION

Our purpose is to improve lives by providing affordable homes, great services and supporting communities. This is our second Environment, Social and Governance Report and covers the financial year ending 31 March 2021.

All three aspects are central to who we are and what we do. Our organisation has an impact on the local and wider environment, both directly through our corporate activities and indirectly through the energy and resource use of our residents. We have a clear social purpose to let homes at affordable levels, supporting people who cannot access housing through the open market. Central to this is strong and effective leadership and governance, providing stewardship of community assets and resources to ensure they are used in the most efficient and effective way.



ENVIRONMENT

Indicator	2020/21 Result	2020/21 Target	2019/20 Result
Carbon footprint of business operations	616 tonnes	-	727 tonnes
Percentage of homes with a C+ energy rating	70%	-	71%
Percentage of homes with solar panels	15%	-	15%
Total renewable energy production	5,739MWh	-	5,484MWh
Percentage of waste diverted from landfill	99%	100%	99%

During the year, we saw a reduction in our carbon footprint which can be attributed to two factors; firstly the global pandemic and subsequent need for staff to either work from home or take furlough leave meant that offices were largely unused during the year and the mileage for fleet vehicles was significantly reduced. Sadly, we also permanently closed our Manufacturing Unit in March 2020 resulted in reduced energy use. In future we plan to trial electric vans to understand whether these vehicles would be fit for purpose for our business requirements in future; to support this we are in the process of installing further electric vehicle charging points at Plumer House.

The percentage of homes with an energy rating of C or above is broadly the same as the previous year, and plans are being put in place for a revised asset management strategy, which will seek to address the gap in energy efficiency performance by 2030. This strategy forms part of a wider set of plans to work towards decarbonising our homes and business by 2050 in line with Government targets.

Our new-build homes are, on average, built to an energy efficiency rating of B, which includes 72 homes built to the Passivhaus standard. Pleasingly, a recent report produced by Warm Associates showed that the new homes in one of our developments built using modern methods of construction are just as energy efficient as the Passivhaus homes and that residents prefer this type of home to live in.

The current energy efficiency distribution of our homes is as follows:

	Energy Efficiency Rating							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	No EPC
Number of homes	94	1788	7988	3809	261	42	7	22
Percentage of homes	0.67%	12.76%	57.01%	27.19%	1.86%	0.30%	0.05%	0.16%

The Display Energy Certificate for our main corporate building, Plumer House, shows that it is a C rating which is above the average for a public building, which currently stands at a D.

The proportion of homes with solar panel remains the same, as the installation programme has ended, however the panels connected to our monitoring system performed better than in the previous year, generating 255MWh more energy in 2020/21. We also have panels on some of our new-build homes and at The Beacon which are stand-alone systems.

The percentage of our waste disposed via more sustainable routes other than landfill remained the same over the previous year. The bulk of our waste arises from clearance of empty homes and fly-tipping which is taken to our own recycling centre and each item is sorted for reuse or recycling, which helps keep costs down and allows us to dispose of these items in a more environmentally friendly way. Decent quality items are retained and stored for reuse and are passed on free of charge to residents who need furniture and other household goods.

We continue to hold certification in the ISO14001:2015 standard for Environmental Management, audited and certified by the British Standards Institute.

SOCIAL

Indicator	2020/21 Result	2020/21 Target	2019/20 Result
Affordability			
Percentage of rents set below LHA limits	99.82%	-	99.9%
Percentage split of homes by tenure:			
Social rent:	70%	-	74.6%
Affordable rent:	28%	-	24%
Shared ownership:	2%	-	1.4%
New homes completed – affordable rent	58	88	74
New homes completed – shared ownership	39	67	30
Current tenant arrears as a percentage of amount due	1.36%	2%	1.43%
Number of evictions carried out for rent arrears	1	-	14
Buildings			
Percentage of homes with a valid gas safety certificate	99.95%	100%	99.99%
Percentage of homes with a valid fire risk assessment	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard	99.7%	100%	99.3%
Resident satisfaction and complaints			
Percentage of residents satisfied with PCH as their landlord	91.2%	-	91.2%
Percentage of residents satisfied with the repairs service	97.2%	95%	96.1%
Percentage of residents satisfied with major works	97.1%	95%	81.4%
Number of stage 1 complaints received	236	-	311
Number of stage 2 complaints received	13	-	7
Number of stage 3 complaints received	4	-	0
Percentage of complaints closed within timeframe	97%	100%	99%

Our social purpose is central to the way we do business. We are here to meet the housing needs of people who cannot afford private rented housing, have additional support requirements, or need help with sustaining their tenancy.

The rents charged are some of the lowest in the sector; our social rents are on average £10 per week lower than other providers in the Plymouth area, and are around 50% of the average private rented home. Where rents are paid through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, our lower charges provide value for money to the taxpayer; we call this our social dividend.

Our rents may be low, but we pride ourselves on offering excellent quality homes and services to residents. Overall we have converted 28% of rented homes to affordable rent to support our development programme; however now that we are reaching the end of the corresponding programmes, we are in the process of reducing affordable rents each year until they return to social rent levels.

In addition to rented homes, we have an ever-growing portfolio of shared ownership properties, helping people to take the first step to home ownership in an affordable way. We continue to expand our reach outside of Plymouth, by building or purchasing homes for rent and shared ownership in areas such as Cornwall, West Devon and the South Hams.

The global pandemic required us to change our services rapidly to keep both staff and residents safe during the periods of lockdown. In some cases, this meant either withdrawing services partly or fully or where possible, delivering them virtually. This meant that we took longer than we would normally do to complete repairs, and face-to-face meetings with housing officers or other colleagues had to be conducted online. We also faced challenges with accessing residents' homes to carry out compliance checks as some residents caught the virus or were told to self-isolate.

Despite this, we completed 99.95% of gas safety inspections and all our homes have a fire risk assessment where one is required. We have replaced the cladding and roofing on the Mount Wise Towers, protecting the safety of residents living in these high-rise blocks following the discovery of similar cladding to that used at the Grenfell Tower, which tragically burned down.

We had a large increase in the number of residents claiming Universal Credit following the closure of many businesses due to the lockdowns; our Incomes Team provided high levels of support to many residents to help them get access to the money they are entitled to. We saw an initial increase in arrears as the pandemic took hold, but at the end of March 2021, these had recovered back to more normal levels. Even though there was a ban on evictions at the height of the pandemic, evictions are always the last resort for Plymouth Community Homes and are only carried out once every option has been exhausted. One resident lost their home during 2020/21 because of sustained non-payment of rent over many years and this took place prior to the ban coming into effect.

New lettings were restricted to the most severe of circumstances during the initial period of lockdown, and Plymouth Community Homes worked in partnership with Plymouth City Council to help get homeless people off the streets and into safe and secure accommodation.

In addition to the above, we also provided additional support for vulnerable tenants by carrying out regular telephone or video calls to help prevent isolation and to check on their wellbeing generally – overall we made more than 30,000 of these calls during the year. Where we received anti-social behaviour reports during the lockdown periods, our housing teams were able to work with the Courts to hold telephone hearings for injunctions and other legal avenues for stopping such behaviour in our neighbourhoods. This is all part of our role as a placemaker and community leader, supporting our residents to live in well-managed and thriving neighbourhoods.

Throughout the pandemic, we also supported our staff as they faced difficulties with childcare, the need to work from home and came to terms with the impact that the pandemic would have on our lives. We offered furlough leave paid at 100% of the salary to employees in roles that were temporarily not required during the lockdowns, and we took a flexible and pragmatic approach for staff with children or other caring responsibilities.

In addition to the above we made charitable donations to the value of £45,000 which was shared by Plymouth Age Concern, Plymouth Foodbank, Tamar Grow Local, Devon and Cornwall Food Action and Provide Devon.

Staff continue to have access to an Employee Assistance Programme, and we have accredited Mental Health First Aiders across the business who can support their colleagues in times of difficulty.



GOVERNANCE

Indicator	2020/21 Result	2020/21 Target	2019/20 Result
Number of Board members	12	12	12
Of which male:	42%	-	41%
Of which female:	58%	-	59%
Average age of Board members	62	-	51
Percentage of Board members who are BAME	0%	-	0%
CEO - lowest paid worker ratio	9.81x	10x	9.81x
Gender pay gap	-1.4%	0%	1.5%
Regulatory grading – governance	G1	-	G1
Regulatory grading – financial viability	V1	-	V1
Code of Governance	NHF 2020	-	NHF 2015
Investors in People Rating	Gold	-	Gold
Standard and Poors credit rating	A+	-	A+

Strong corporate governance is essential in a thriving and high-performing organisation. Our Board is a group of 12 non-executive directors who are responsible for the overall strategic direction and governance of the organisation. The Board is supported by a Chief Executive and three Executive Directors who are responsible for the day to day running of the business.

We have upcoming vacancies for our Board, and we will aim to encourage applications from under-represented groups to increase the diversity of our Board of Directors. Plymouth Community Homes is registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and has charitable status. It has no majority shareholder, although interested parties can purchase one share to gain voting rights on the company rules. Each share has a nominal value of £1, which no right to interest, dividend, or bonus.

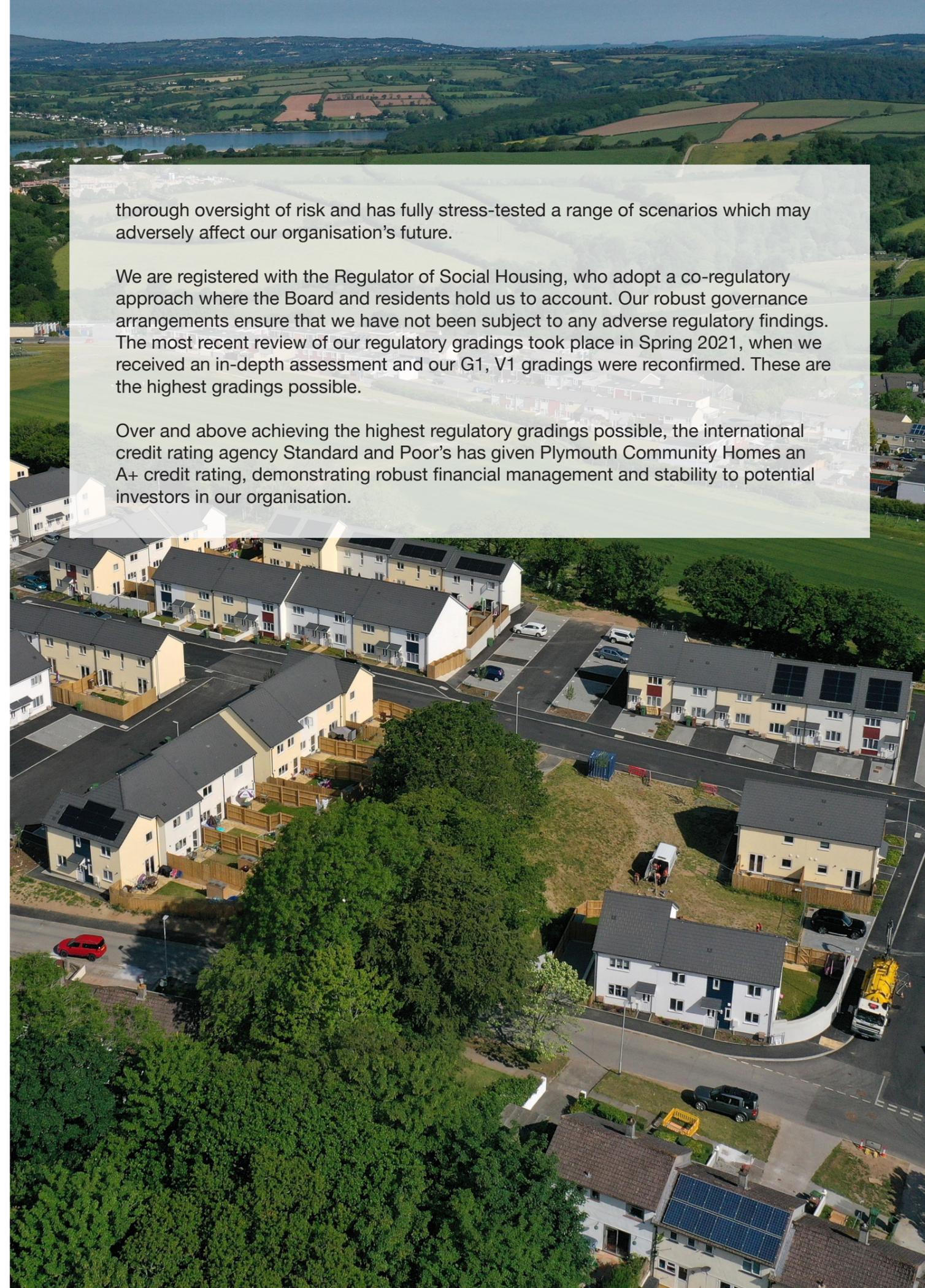
PCH has a transparent corporate group structure as a parent company with three subsidiary companies, this allows us to trade in a for-profit context whilst reducing the risk associated with such activities.

Each year our Boards and Committees must consider their effectiveness in line with regulatory guidance. Once every three years, the National Housing Federation Code of Governance requires members to have a formal review at least every three years, which was last carried out in 2019. We are in the process of implementing the new 2020 Code of Governance. This places additional requirements on our organisation to place residents to at the centre of strategic decision making, to make sure we have measures in place to keep residents and staff safe, and finally to make sure that the Board has a

thorough oversight of risk and has fully stress-tested a range of scenarios which may adversely affect our organisation's future.

We are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, who adopt a co-regulatory approach where the Board and residents hold us to account. Our robust governance arrangements ensure that we have not been subject to any adverse regulatory findings. The most recent review of our regulatory gradings took place in Spring 2021, when we received an in-depth assessment and our G1, V1 gradings were reconfirmed. These are the highest gradings possible.

Over and above achieving the highest regulatory gradings possible, the international credit rating agency Standard and Poor's has given Plymouth Community Homes an A+ credit rating, demonstrating robust financial management and stability to potential investors in our organisation.





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