



**ATRIUM**  
HOMES

The Landlord of Choice

QUALITY  
AFFORDABLE  
HOMES

SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITIES

LIFE CHANCES  
FOR PEOPLE

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## Dear Members

### WELCOME TO ATRIUM'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018/19

This is my first Annual Report to you as Chair and I am delighted to be able to introduce another very successful year for Atrium Homes, one in which we laid the foundations for services and activities for the next four to five years.

In the course of the year, we updated our Business Plan and linked it to what we have called our 'Homes Fit For 21st Century Living Standard'. This standard was developed in conjunction with our Tenant Scrutiny Group, before being rolled out to all our tenants as part of a broad consultation exercise in August 2018. We were delighted to have positive support from tenants for our proposals and we have since identified a framework of contractors to undertake the work over the next four years. Our objective is that by 2023/24, all our properties will have been brought to our new standard.

We also started construction on 27 new properties, replacing some older ones in the process. As part of our Business Plan we hope to add up to 75 more new properties by 2023/24.

None of this activity would be achievable if we were not such a strong and stable organisation, with a solid financial footing and a value for money approach. We have significant borrowings for an organisation of our size and our plans mean we will have to borrow more in the next few years. However, we have prepared for this and are confident we can deliver our longer-term proposals while still keeping rents reasonable and rent increases around the inflation level.

I have already mentioned our Tenant Scrutiny Group, but would like to highlight the role they have played in helping move forward key policies during the year. In our Business Planning activities, they helped

shape the format of the broader consultation exercise. But they also played a major part in the review of our Repairs and Debt Management Policies, our Void Lettable Standard and our Medical Adaptation Policy.

We are very thankful to have this excellent group of interested tenants assisting us and I look forward to their further involvement as we move forward.

Good governance continues to be of enormous importance to Atrium and the housing association sector as a whole. This year we have been preparing the ground for the Board to issue its first Annual Assurance Statement. This is a statement required by the Scottish Housing Regulator confirming our level of compliance with their Regulatory Standards. The Board and senior staff team have worked very closely together to identify and review the evidence which we have in support of our position, so that we can submit our first Annual Assurance Statement before 31 October 2019.

We have also welcomed some new Board members in the course of 2018/19, replacing others who stood down, having served us well. That is the nature of our governance arrangements and we are always keen to hear from people who are willing to volunteer to serve on our Board.

Customer service remains very high on our list of priorities and we were very pleased to see this reflected in the views of our tenants and others through our most recent Customer Satisfaction Survey in October/ November 2018. All in all, there were increases in 6 out of 8 Scottish Social Housing Categories, with satisfaction levels remaining the same in the other two.

Nearly 90% of tenants said they were satisfied with Atrium's overall service and our Repairs service; both up from our last survey in 2016.

These outcomes reflect the efforts of our staff team, many of whom are involved with our customers on a day-to-day basis. To bring greater value to the staff team and to prepare for delivering our Business Plan objectives, we conducted a major staff review and restructure in 2018. The expanded team is now in place and focussed on delivering Atrium's vision of quality affordable homes, sustainable communities and life chances for people.

I would like to end by thanking my colleagues on the Board for their support over the year and acknowledge the staff team for continuing to deliver first class services to the customers of Atrium Homes.

Best wishes

*J. Keen*

**Joe Keen**  
Chair, Atrium Homes





# GOVERNANCE + STAFF

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Atrium Homes is a company limited by guarantee and a registered Scottish charity. Our Board of Directors are all volunteers and receive no payments; all give their time freely to support the good governance of the organisation. The Board met eight times in the course of 2018/19 to conduct its routine business and the overall average attendance at Board meetings in the year ran at 72%. In addition, three sub-committees of the Board each met a further four times.

There are 12 places on the Board and details of who served during the year are shown below. Although a number of Board members left in the course of the year, they were replaced through open recruitment. This is a normal process for organisations like Atrium, and helps achieve an appropriate balance of skills and experience at Board level.

In the course of the year, the Board conducted a comprehensive review of Atrium's Business Plan and staff structure, and set in motion plans that will see significant investment in our existing housing and the construction of up to 100 new houses, over the next four years.

At the same time, the Board has been embracing changes in the Regulatory Framework applicable to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Scotland, which were presented in 2018 and came into effect on 1 April 2019. Under these new arrangements, the Board will be issuing an Annual Assurance Statement outlining its view of Atrium's compliance with the requirements of the Regulatory Framework. This will be available by 31 October each year, commencing in 2019.

### REGULATORY STATUS

Like all RSLs in Scotland, Atrium Homes is subject to regulation by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). Atrium enjoyed low engagement status under the former Regulatory Framework, although the SHR has still to identify our regulatory status under the new Framework.

The SHR has, however, indicated it does not require any further assurance from Atrium at this time, other than the routine annual regulatory returns required from all RSLs.



Joe Keen  
Chair from 28.08.18

Graham Piggott  
Vice-Chair

James O'Neill  
Chair until 28.08.18

Marie Coyle

Ken Stewart

Brian Woods

Hugh McIntosh  
Appointed 28.08.18



David Sherlock  
Appointed 28.08.18

Alistair Reid  
Appointed 27.11.18

George Welsh  
Resigned 29.05.18

Anthony Odendaal  
Resigned 26.06.18

Kara Alker  
Resigned 28.08.18

Mary Nilsen  
Resigned 26.11.18

David Aitken  
Resigned 27.11.18

## TRAINING + DEVELOPMENT

### STAFFING

Atrium Homes employs 31 staff in total, while Atrium Initiatives has a further five. With staffing being one of our three largest costs (along with investment in our housing stock and interest payments on borrowings), we want to maximise the effectiveness of our staff team.

The Atrium Group as a whole takes its responsibilities as an employer very seriously and aims to provide a safe, healthy and modern working environment. In return, we ask for staff commitment to our objectives and that staff operate as one team for the benefit of our customers.

### TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

A key part of ensuring organisational effectiveness is to invest in staff through regular training activity. In the course of the year, staff attended a range of training and development sessions aimed at maintaining core skills, enhancing overall effectiveness and introducing new knowledge in response to changes in our operating environment.

Similarly, Board members attended a number of sessions - either collectively or individually - to expand their knowledge of particular areas. All new Board members joining the organisation attended induction training aimed at giving them greater insight into Atrium and the sector in which we operate.

Over and above external courses, we ran a series of Lunch and Learn briefings for staff to give them a greater insight into key activities of our organisation.

### EYDENT CONFERENCE

Eydent is the name of the Alliance of Ayrshire Housing Associations, made up of ANCHO, Atrium Homes, Ayrshire Housing and Shire Housing. Now in its 7th year, Eydent exists to strengthen locally-controlled housing associations to ensure effective and responsive services which address the needs of the communities of North, South and East Ayrshire. The focus is very much about sharing good practice and collaboration around shared challenges and opportunities.

The Group met quarterly in 2018/19 and arranged and delivered a number of joint networking and training sessions involving Board members of the partner organisations.

## Staff & Board training 2018-19

### FEBRUARY 2018

- Chaining Skills (SHARE)
- GDPR Eydent Training (SHARE)

### MAY 2018

- SHAPS Support Group (EVH)
- Health & Safety (EVH)
- GDPR Training (In-House)

### JUNE 2018

- CPAG Welfare (CPAG)
- Construction Management HNC (Kilmarnock College)

### SEPTEMBER 2018

- Electronic Model Procurement (SFHA)
- Customer First Training

### NOVEMBER 2018

- Health & Safety (EVH)
- Tenancy Management (LAS)

### FEB/MARCH 2019

- Future Leaders Programme (EVH)

### MARCH 2019

- Customer Care (In-House)
- Flexible Working (EVH)



# FINANCE

## OVERVIEW

- Overall turnover has remained consistent with the prior year. There was an overall increase of 6.1% in rental income due in the year. This was in part due to the inflationary increase of 3.2% applied to all existing stock on 1 April 2018, and in part due to the additional income from 45 new build units which were added to the stock in 2018.
- Operating costs as a percentage of income increased slightly from 70.3% in 2018 to 74.0% in 2019. However, we continued to control costs and performed favourably within the short and long term budgets set, posting another operating surplus in the year. This will be used to fund the future Planned Maintenance Programme across all our housing stock.

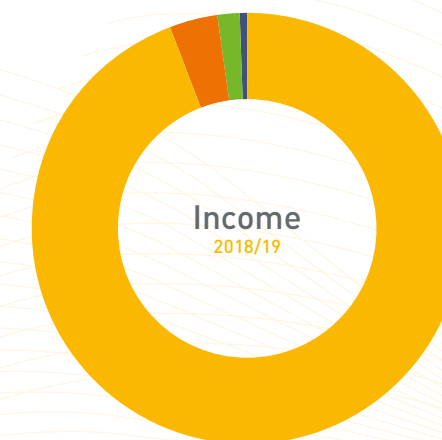
- Successfully managing the financing of our core activities continues to be a key priority and this remains on track with our previous performance in this area. Our budget for further investment in the Planned Maintenance Programme has been increased to ensure that every property we own meets our own 'Homes Fit for 21st Century Living Standard' by 2023/24.

- We continue to manage our finances with a long term perspective. Opportunities will always be weighed up as they arise and we are keen to ensure we maximise value for money outcomes for our tenants.

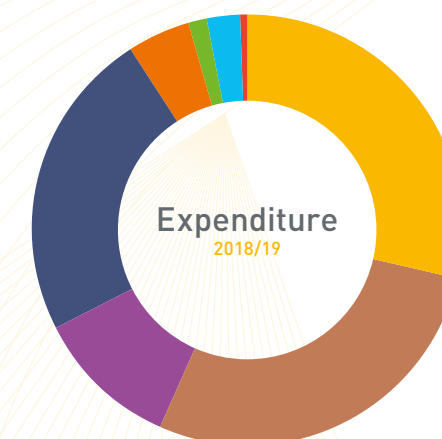
### SUMMARY INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2019 & COMPARATIVE

	18/19 £,000	17/18 £,000
Turnover	5,529	5,193
Operating costs	(4,094)	(3,650)
<b>Operating Surplus</b>	<b>1,435</b>	<b>1,543</b>
Loss on disposal of housing stock	(20)	0
Interest receivable	15	20
Interest payable	(500)	(454)
Other finance charges	(18)	(4)
<b>(Deficit)/surplus for the year</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>1,105</b>
Other comprehensive income	(489)	0
Reserves brought forward	16,163	15,058
<b>Reserves carried forward</b>	<b>16,586</b>	<b>16,163</b>

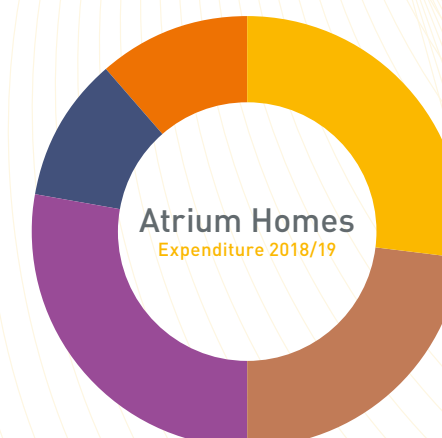
Income 2018/19	Total £,000	As %
• Rents	5,225	94.2%
• Other	201	3.6%
• Medical adapts	103	1.9%
• Interest receivable	15	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,544</b>	<b>100%</b>



Expenditure 2018/19	Total £,000	As %
• Maintenance	1,337	28.9%
• Depreciation Social Housing	1,294	27.9%
• Loan Interest	500	10.8%
• Management	1,091	23.6%
• Other	207	4.5%
• Bad Debts	71	1.5%
• Medical Adapts	114	2.5%
• Other finance costs	18	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,632</b>	<b>100%</b>



Atrium Homes Expenditure 2018/19	Total £,000	As %
• Staff Costs	1,252	27%
• Maintenance	1,065	23%
• Depreciation Social Housing	1,294	28%
• Loan Interest	500	10.8%
• Other	521	11.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,632</b>	<b>100%</b>





# OPERATIONS REVIEW

The Operations team delivers a range of frontline services and is typically the first point of contact for many of our customers.

They provide a housing management service to tenants, to help make sure our estates are safe, clean and happy places to live in. This covers services such as rent and arrears, money advice, the allocation of empty properties, addressing neighbour issues, and conducting garden and landscape maintenance inspections.

The team plays a vital role in creating great homes and neighbourhoods within our stock, and achieves this by spending considerable time out in our communities. In this last year we have continued to work in the neighbourhoods where our customers live, increasing the focus on staff being visible and accessible to all.

## MONEY MANAGEMENT

Our Money Management team monitors and manages rent and other payments. Rental payments are our main source of income and ensure the financial viability of Atrium and our ongoing ability to invest in services, properties and communities.

### In 2018/19 we:

- Collected over 98% of rent due - over £5.02 million.
- Managed to maintain gross rent arrears to just over 5.25%, despite the rising number of tenants now being awarded Universal Credit.
- Carried out three rent-related evictions against tenants who did not engage with us and did not find a solution to their debt problems.
- Served 181 Notice of Proceedings with eight court actions initiated. This represents a slight increase in NOPs served from the previous year, but with a reduced number of court actions raised. Staff continue to work with tenants who are the subject of legal action to make reasonable repayment arrangements and refer them to our in-house Money Advice Service to ensure all support is in place to try and manage the arrear. We have always maintained that while tenants engage with us to address their financial issues, we will not progress legal action.

## IMPACT OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT

At the end of March 2019, we had 236 tenants claiming Universal Credit. Households on Universal Credit accounted for 45.10% of total gross arrears, representing 31% of the cases.

On average, a household on Universal Credit has an arrear 75% higher than those households not in receipt of Universal Credit. Often this is directly related to the period of delay between the loss of existing benefits and Universal Credit beginning.

We continue to offer intensive support to all Universal Credit claimants, with services ranging from the initial claim, to assessment and payment of housing costs.

## ALLOCATIONS + VOIDS

We aim to provide good quality, affordable rented accommodation to those in greatest housing need. We work hard to make sure accommodation is repaired to an acceptable standard for new tenants in a reasonable period of time.

### In 2018/19 we:

- Re-let 124 properties.
- Let two acquired properties for the first time.
- Made 218 formal offers of housing, carrying out verification visits and accompanied viewings as part of this process.
- Helped process a share of 2,856 new housing applications, bringing the total number of housing applicants on SEARCH, East Ayrshire's Common Housing Register, to 3,722.
- Allocated 32% to applicants on the Waiting list, 18% to the Transfer list, 40% to the Homeless list and the remaining 10% to the Strategic Needs list and the Outwith The District list. We were delighted to make such a significant contribution to reducing the number of homeless households within East Ayrshire and during the year increased our quota to 40% for this list, following a request for assistance from East Ayrshire Council.
- Had only 16 void properties at 31 March 2019, a slight increase from the previous year.
- Terminated and repaired 135 properties during the year, representing 11% turnover of our stock. This was consistent with previous years.
- Took an average of 34.7 days to repair, refresh and re-let our properties. This represents a slight decrease from 35 days the previous year.





## ESTATE MANAGEMENT + ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

While our main aim is to provide good quality homes at affordable rents, we know that residents' enjoyment can be affected by factors other than amenities. We want customers to live in harmony with their neighbours and take all allegations of anti-social behaviour seriously. We aim to do everything we can to ensure tenants enjoy a peaceful, clean and tidy environment. This can be achieved by having a pro-active and strategic approach to the management of our properties, estates and neighbourhoods.

### In 2018/19 we:

- Completed the annual Garden Competition, recognising gardens across our estates that had achieved a high standard of care.

- Dealt with 100 complaints of anti-social behaviour, a slight decrease from the previous year. The majority of complaints were for minor breaches of tenancy, simply requiring staff to speak to parties involved.
- Resolved over 91% of cases within prescribed timescales.
- Carried out regular estate inspections to ensure a high standard of grounds maintenance and cleanliness. The purpose of the visits was to identify issues needing addressed to help keep the estates safe, clean and tidy. A number of the inspections were carried out with tenants and key stakeholders, and were advertised in advance.

- Issued notices and recovered nine properties that were identified as abandoned. This is a slight increase on the previous year and staff continue to stress to tenants the need to follow appropriate termination procedures to end their tenancies.
- Completed weekly checks of all communal areas within flatted blocks to make sure they were being maintained and identified areas for improvements.
- Carried out successful joint operations with East Ayrshire Council to enforce measures against fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and other environmental hazards.

## TENANT ENGAGEMENT

Working together for improvement, tenant engagement covers a variety of approaches through which tenants help us evaluate and provide feedback on our services. We try to engage with tenants and other service users in a range of different ways. Tenant engagement is about our tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, housing conditions and housing (and related) services. It is a two-way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power.

### In 2018/19 we:

- Conducted a calendar of Tenant Scrutiny Group meetings, supported by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service. The Tenant Scrutiny Group looked at performance across a range of Atrium services. Staff worked with the group to review key service policies and took on board their findings on suggested service improvements, specifically in relation to void properties, repairs, and alterations and improvements. The Group was also asked to review the proposed consultation methods for Homes Fit for 21st Century Living Standard, prior to issue to tenants.
- Conducted a full consultation exercise on the annual rent increase using a variety of media.
- Issued two newsletters, sent out updates on Universal Credit and issued ad hoc information flyers.
- Increased the use of social media through SurveyMonkey, email contacts and SMS messaging.
- Carried out a full scale Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted by an independent consultant, The Knowledge Partnership. Door to door interviews took place with over 400 households during October/November 2018, with a final report presented to the Tenant Scrutiny Group in February 2019. From this presentation, the Tenant Scrutiny Group has developed an Action Plan to address issues raised within the Survey.

## COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Atrium Homes' purpose goes beyond providing quality homes and services. We aim to support the diverse needs of our local communities. We believe it is important to play an active role in supporting local residents, groups, charities, etc, enabling them to thrive in vibrant, exciting surroundings.

We encourage a community feel among our tenants through our 'Cash in the Community Fund'. This enables groups of residents or local organisations to develop and realise projects to enhance their communities.

During the year, we supported Shortlees Primary School and New Farm Loch Community Council with funding awards. In addition, sponsorship and donations were also awarded to a number of local groups to facilitate their activities.





## SUPPORTING TENANTS

Atrium Homes has a number of initiatives in place to help all our tenants to participate in everyday life. Financial inclusion and our digital project 'Making the Connection' are just a couple of examples.

Many people struggle with finances at some point in their lives, and for those who need to reach out for help, we have our Money Advice Service. This service offers help with most money-related issues and has assisted many tenants to get back on track, like Mr Smith in the Case Study below.

### In 2018/19 we:

- Helped 417 tenants.
- Supported tenants to claim more than £1,055,659 in ongoing benefits.
- Accessed £11,646 of Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Secured over £70,866 in lump sum payments, including backdated benefits.

### Case Study

Mr Smith had been deemed homeless by East Ayrshire Council after his private landlord issued him a Notice to Quit, so he could sell the property. Mr Smith was put on the housing list as a homeless applicant and was allocated a two bedroom Atrium Homes property.

When Mr Smith signed for his tenancy with us, he attended an appointment with our Money Advice team. They helped him update his Universal Credit claim and submit applications for Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing Payment and a Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant. We also issued Mr Smith with Utility and Home Starter Packs.

### Following this:

- Mr Smith's change of circumstances was updated by Universal Credit and he is now in receipt of his housing costs which he pays to Atrium for his rent.
- He was also awarded Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payment.

However, Mr Smith's application for a Community Care Grant was refused by the Scottish Welfare Fund, stating he did not fit their criteria. Our Money Advice team then assisted Mr Smith to request a review of their decision.

This again was unsuccessful, meaning Mr Smith had no carpets, flooring or household goods for his home.

The team helped Mr Smith to contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to ask for an independent review of the decisions the council made.

The challenge was successful and the council's decision was overturned by the SPSO on 30th July 2019. The tenant was awarded a wardrobe, three carpets, lino for kitchen & bathroom, a bed, cooker, fridge freezer, chest of drawers and a washing machine.

We identified this need following a number of cases where tenants faced considerable hardship. These were people whose tenancies had failed or whose Housing Benefit had been refused in the initial months, and who had no kitchenware or utensils. With a Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant taking at least three weeks to be processed, these tenants were in difficult circumstances.

## UTILITY + HOME STARTER PACKS

We're currently piloting a scheme where we give every new tenant a Utility Pack containing items such as cleaning products and toilet rolls. Those who have no household goods and fit the criteria also receive a Home Starter Pack which includes a kettle, toaster, dinner set, mugs and cutlery.

## OUR 'MAKING THE CONNECTION' PROJECT

Year on year, digital inclusion is becoming increasingly important. From being able to communicate with the outside world, to accessing learning and job opportunities, confidence in using digital methods is a vital skill for participating in modern society.

Following a successful funding application to the Digital Participation Charter Fund, we have been running a project called 'Making the Connection'. Held one day a week, it focuses on equipping tenants with the skills and resources to go online, and then supporting them to stay on.

Over the year, 13 tenants received digital skills training, including people like Mrs S in the Case Study below.

### Case Study

Aged in her seventies, Mrs S did not have internet access, a smartphone or any other way of going online. She wanted to become more digitally aware, but did not know where to start. When she saw our 'Making the Connection' project advertised, Mrs S spoke with the Digital Assistant who went through the foundation and essential skills checklists with her. This showed she had very few foundation skills and no essential skills.

Mrs S was keen to learn digital skills without relying on help from her family, who were all too busy. She knew if she could learn to do this on her own, she would feel a real sense of achievement. Each week we have been taking little steps at a time, while Mrs S gains digital knowledge and confidence. Mrs S has now bought herself a tablet and continues to attend on a weekly basis to further develop her skills.



# ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

## HOMES FIT FOR 21ST CENTURY LIVING STANDARD (HFF21CLS)

Throughout the year, Atrium continued to develop proposals to improve our housing stock through the introduction of our HFF21CLS. In August 2018, we wrote to all our tenants to set out our plans for investment and provided more detailed information on what this might look like. This included a draft of the HFF21CLS that we used to determine the level of investment specific to individual property types; the 'Core Improvement Works' for each; and any additional works that may be necessary in each of the property types.

In September 2018, works began in six void properties earmarked as pilot properties for HFF21CLS. Five of these were completed by November 2018, with the final property (wheelchair-adapted) completed in February 2019. We received Major Repairs Adaptation Funding to cover the costs of carrying out alterations to the wheelchair-adapted property, to meet the needs of the prospective tenant.

Having established the detail of the new standard, we continued to work with the project Quantity Surveyor to develop a scope of works, and prepare procurement and tender documentation to resource these works. From October 2018, we began a lengthy procurement journey to establish a Framework of Contractors suitably qualified to carry out the HFF21CLS works, and meet our quality standard and timeframe for delivery. We anticipate the procurement process will be complete by spring 2019, allowing works on the first phase to begin in summer 2019.

## NEW BUILD ACTIVITY

### SUNNYSIDE SQUARE, WEST – SHORTLEES

Further to an update on the Business Plan proposals presented in March 2018, the Board gave approval in May 2018 to progress design proposals at Sunnyside Square, West, to build 27 new homes consisting of:

- 3 general needs houses
- 16 older and ambulant-disabled bungalows
- 4 general needs flats
- 4 amenity flats.

The proposals also included the demolition of eight of the Atholl Steel flats in the area immediately adjacent to the cleared site.

Further site investigations were undertaken throughout the course of the year, during which time we progressed all pre-site activities and concluded the design and layout. Statutory applications - such as Demolition Warrant, Planning, Roads Construction Consent and Scottish Water Technical Audit - were submitted during 2018/19 and some approved prior to the year end.

The Board also approved the direct call-off of McTaggart Construction from the Scottish Procurement Alliance's (SPA's) H1 – WS2 Housing Construction Framework, meaning we could work with this contractor early in the process, to improve upon any issues on design or specification. Project particulars were concluded with a view to submitting a Tender Application for Scottish Government funding in spring 2019, and for works to begin on site early summer 2019.

## COMMUNITY BENEFITS

### SHORTLEES PRIMARY SCHOOL 'WALKING BUS' INITIATIVE

A total of £3,300 was contributed to the Shortlees Primary School 'Walking Bus' Initiative for the 2018-19 school session, made up of equal sums from McTaggart Construction, City Technical Services and Atrium Homes.

### GARDEN COMPETITION

EEG contributed £300, which was utilised as prize money for Atrium's annual Garden Competition.



# MAJOR REPAIRS + IMPROVEMENTS

## PLANNED INVESTMENT 2018/19

This year our focus has been to finalise the works necessary to meet our HFF21CLS. However, where works were required throughout the year, we achieved best value by obtaining quotes from a range of local contractors.

This resulted in us using Atrium Property Services, A1 Glass, City Technical Services, DCR Plumbing, AL Plumbing, Milligan Electrical, ECG Home Improvements, Affiniti Response, Prater Contracts and Murchland Construction for component replacement works.

The table below shows the number of units where activity was completed. Overall, we spent over £231,241 on these works in 2018/19.

The table includes units where components have been replaced within the six pilot properties selected for the HFF21CLS, and for additional works to one of the units to make it wheelchair accessible.

### Actual completions for planned activity in 2018/19

Scope of Works	No of Units
Boilers	12
Kitchens	12
Electrical Rewires or Major Improvements	9
Bathrooms	5
Heating Systems	4
Windows	2
External Doors	1
Wet Floor Showers (Medical Adaptations)	11

### CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE

During the year:

- Bell Decorating Group completed gutter cleaning at 338 units.
- Campbell and Kennedy Electrical carried out electrical testing at 52 units.
- The core cyclical activity of gas servicing and landscape maintenance proceeded as scheduled, undertaken by City Technical Services and Euro Environmental Group Ltd (EEG), respectively.

### NETHER ROBERTLAND, STEWARTON – EXTERNAL WALL INSULATION (EWI)

Building on the success of Meikle Court, we entered into a further contract with both the Energy Agency and SERS Ltd to undertake EWI works to our 23 No Fines properties in Nether Robertland. The project began in January 2019 and is due to complete in summer 2019.

### 'OFF THE SHELF' PURCHASES

Atrium purchased two additional properties in the flatted block at Meikle Court, Nether Robertland through the support of a 'Second Hand Homes' grant from the Scottish Government. These both settled in March 2019.





# ATRIUM INITIATIVES

Atrium Initiatives is the wholly owned subsidiary of Atrium Homes. Established in 2006, it provides services to Atrium Homes under the brands of Choice Places and Atrium Property Services.

## CHOICE PLACES

### CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

A satisfaction survey of factored owners was carried out by The Knowledge Partnership on behalf of Choice Places. The survey was administered during October/ November 2018, and by the conclusion of the fieldwork period, 200 factored owners had been interviewed, representing 31% of the available survey sample.

The most common cause for dissatisfaction amongst owners in relation to factoring, was that they did not always know what they were legally responsible for around their neighbourhood. This is sometimes compounded by a lack of awareness of responsibilities under title deeds and the absence of detailed reference materials where issues such as boundaries can be reviewed.

We will be planning activities in the coming year to try to help owners receive more value from the services of Choice Places.

### Key findings:

Category	2016	2018
Percentage of owners satisfied with the overall services of Choice Places	46%	60%
Percentage of owners satisfied with the condition of open spaces near their homes	49%	61%
Percentage of owners satisfied with their contacts with Choice Places	68%	73%
Percentage of owners satisfied with the clarity of invoicing information from Choice Places	75%	71%
Percentage of owners who know how to make a complaint to Choice Places if they were dissatisfied	n/a	73%
Percentage of owners saying the amount of information they receive from Choice Places is "about right"	77%	78%
Percentage of owners who say the administration charge levied by Choice Places is good value for money	35%	43%

## ATRIUM INITIATIVES SERVICES ACTIVITY

### RESURFACING CONTRACT, VARIOUS AREAS, NEW FARM LOCH

Following a process of consultation, Atrium Initiatives competitively tendered the proposed works in March 2018. Hillhouse Quarry won the contract and the works completed on target on 21 June 2018.

### MEIKLE COURT EXTERNAL UPGRADE, INCLUDING EXTERNAL WALL INSULATION

SERS Ltd began on site in January 2018, having been procured through the Scottish Procurement Alliance (SPA), and completed in May 2018. The works have made a significant improvement to the energy efficiency and aesthetic of the building.

The cost for undertaking this project was met in part through the Scottish Government's Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland (HEEPS) and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding. The works were co-ordinated by the factor, Choice Places, in partnership with the Energy Agency, who provided Client Agent Services for the project.

### FINANCES

We have to budget very carefully for the services delivered by Choice Places, to ensure there is sufficient income to meet ongoing expenses, planned works and any ad hoc works to factored properties. Equally, we have to make sure our charges are reasonable and proportionate to the work undertaken. Increases in administration charges have been restricted to close to inflation in recent years.

In the course of 2018/19, factoring made a small profit of 5.4% which translates to £28k against a turnover for the cost centre of £524k. This profit is not distributed, but is gift aided to Atrium Homes to help keep overall costs down.



## ATRIUM PROPERTY SERVICES

APS employs five operatives who deliver void and responsive repairs services to Atrium Homes and our customers. We have seen a number of positive outcomes in the past 12 months, including improved performance in key operational areas, reduced costs and a more pro-active service delivery model.

In the course of the year, the team undertook nearly 1687 responsive repairs, including emergencies and Right to Repair works. One hundred percent of these works were completed within the allocated timeframe.

In addition, the team undertook work to 126 void properties, including inspecting, scoping and specifying the extent of the repairs needed to relet the properties. 122 of the voids (97%) were returned within the allocated timeframe, with the remainder delayed for various reasons. In overall terms, an average of 22 working days of APS time was needed to inspect and repair each void property.

We continued with our pro-active property Inspect & Repair Programme - 'Property MOTs' - and conducted 38 MOTs throughout this period. We will look to improve on this figure in the coming year by visiting a greater number of homes.

Our customers have been very positive about the services APS have been delivering so far:

"I wanted to pass on my thanks for sending such a lovely tradesman, polite, helpful and carried out the work and left no mess - we are quick to complain but not so quick to compliment."

*Ms P Shortlees*  
Responsible Repairs team

# REPAIRS SERVICE

Atrium is committed to looking after our current stock. We recognise that for the majority of tenants, repairs is a top priority and is the service most of our customers access on a regular basis. We are committed to taking good care of our properties so our tenants can live in a safe, comfortable environment, and to make sure we protect our assets and investment. We aim to provide value for money in everything we do, and this is particularly true when it comes to looking after our tenants' homes.

## REACTIVE REPAIRS

We aim to offer a prompt, high quality service to make sure our properties are always well looked after and meet the needs and expectations of our tenants.

### In 2018/19 we:

- Recorded and processed 3,912 one-off repair requests (approximately 75 per week), an increase of five per week from the previous year:

- 588 were emergency repairs (a slight increase on last year). On average, emergency repairs took 1.93 hours to complete from the time reported (against 2.07 hours last year).
- 3,324 were non-emergency repairs, completed in an average of 5.04 days (against 4.32 days last year).
- on average, each property within the stock had 3.38 repairs carried out over the year, a small increase from the previous year.

- Completed 95.4% of all repairs right first time, an increase from the previous year.
- Kept over 96% of repairs appointments, an increase from the previous year.

Atrium had 1,170 properties with gas installations requiring to have an annual landlord safety check carried out. One hundred percent of these properties had their Certificate [CP12] renewed before their anniversary date, fulfilling our statutory obligation.

## MEDICAL ADAPTATIONS

We believe it is important to help people who have support needs to live independent lives and be able to stay within their current property. With funding of £72,000 from the Scottish Government (a further reduction on the previous year's award), we were able to complete over 83% of approved applications, taking an average of 71 days from acceptance.

### Works completed included:

- 13 wet floor showers
- 13 handrails
- 20 grabrails
- 4 bannisters

These adaptations allowed people to remain within their existing home, by adapting it to their needs.



# FUTURE YEARS' ACTIVITY

## ASSET MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Our revised Business Plan approved by the Board in March 2018, is now based on an Asset Management Investment Strategy which anticipates investment of around £20million on our housing stock over the course of the next four to five years. Our objective is to ensure every property we own meets our own Homes Fit for 21st Century Living Standard.

The standard was developed over 2017/18 in response to tenant views expressed in the 2016 Customer Satisfaction Survey. It was reviewed by our Tenant Scrutiny Group before progression to wholesale tenant consultation in August 2018.

The work will involve internal and, where needed, external improvement of our older properties. Work started in January 2018 to improve the energy efficiency of a number of No Fines construction properties in Nether Robertland, Stewarton by installing external wall insulation. This investment will be extended to similar properties in New Farm Loch in 2019/20.

We will begin work to improve the internal finishes of properties in Bellfield and Burnpark in 2019/20, and then roll this work out systematically, year by year, through all our older housing stock. We aim to finish this major investment activity by 2023/24.

### NEW HOUSING

Following the demolition of eight Atholl Steel properties and the rehousing of their tenants, work has started on 27 new properties in Shortlees, to provide a mixture of property types to meet a range of needs. The majority will be for older and ambulant disabled persons, and we anticipate the first of these homes will be occupied by April 2020.

Our Business Plan has the potential to provide more new properties, depending on which of several strategies our Board chooses to adopt. With this in mind, we have identified two further phases of new build for inclusion within East Ayrshire Council's Strategic Housing Investment Programme over the next five years. For now, we are cautiously planning for the future, while carefully monitoring the broader economy.

## BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

In the short term, we are aiming to improve customer information and communication options through digitalisation. This will include a radical overhaul of the Atrium Homes and Choice Places websites, to make them more user friendly and interactive.

We also have plans to introduce a customer portal - which will allow customers to access our services whenever they want - and to introduce more routine usage of SMS and email, for faster and more cost efficient communications with our customers.

QUALITY  
AFFORDABLE  
HOMES

SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITIES

LIFE CHANCES  
FOR PEOPLE





Atrium House  
14 Central Avenue  
Shortlees  
Kilmarnock  
KA1 4PS

[atrium-homes.co.uk](http://atrium-homes.co.uk)



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HOMES

The Landlord of Choice