accent

# VALUE FOR MONEY

# SELF ASSESSMENT

# 2013/14

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# 1 Our approach to value for money

## 1.1 Our strategy

Our strategy to value for money is to ensure it is embedded within our new business plan and not separate to it. We believe that this will continue the approach of having value for money at the heart of what we do.

In order to track our performance we maintain a log of value for money achievements, a sample of those items is included as an appendix. We believe that the use of this log could be broadened and that this would help to demonstrate that staff understand value for money and seek out opportunities to make savings or increase the value of the service they deliver in their everyday roles.

We seek assurance about the value of our services through comparing our costs and performance over time, and with our peers where appropriate. We are members of Housemark and undertake the annual benchmarking exercise in order to understand our relative performance on costs and quality of service. We also use Procurement for All (PfA) as a benchmark for asset management work.

In the past this has been undertaken by each individual housing association within the group. 2013/14 is a year of transition as our service delivery structure has completely changed, and we have consolidated into one organisation. This not only presents us with a challenge on comparing ‘apples with apples’ when compared to previous years data, but the significant variations in the markets we operate in across the organisation mean that benchmarking meaningfully as a group is also a challenge.

Despite this we feel that our wide geographical spread of properties is one of our strengths as it spreads our risk of exposure to poor markets, for example the stagnant market conditions we are operating within in the North East do not exist in our other regions and therefore only affect a small proportion of our stock.

In order to demonstrate our continuous improvement in value for money we are working with Housemark to map our previous year’s submissions against our new structure. This should enable us to perform meaningful comparisons of our costs and performance over time. Whilst the Housemark data will provide a useful overview, it is only available once a year. We use a range of indicators to track performance against our own targets and it is these which provide assurance to board and other stakeholders that we are driving down costs whilst improving service delivery.

Financial efficiency is one of the key ways we can drive value for money. The board has agreed a set of ‘golden rules’ for financial efficiency:

- We aim to deliver a group surplus of between £2-3M and maintain 5% headroom for our gearing covenants, and 10% headroom for our interest covenants.
- Business as usual activities are cash positive or neutral after funding the cost of the core service and paying the interest cost and the cost of any loan.
- We have established tolerances for variations to budget. Year to date actual surplus/deficit position of plus or minus 5% when compared to budget must be subject to an explanation from the relevant executive director.

- The ongoing annual savings of £1.75m from our ‘Fit for the Future’ comprehensive value for money review are separately identified in the income and expenditure account and are used to fund development.
- The default use for capital asset proceeds should be to generate new income earning capital assets. If that is not possible then the proceeds should be used to repay debt or for the re-provision of poorly performing capital assets. Proceeds should not be used for revenue expenditure.
- As agreed in our community investment strategy circa 5% of turnover is ring-fenced for investing in community investment.

Value for money has been at the heart of Accent’s decision making over the last 5 years. This can be summarised into two phases:

- 2007-2013
- 2013/14

It is important to understand these two phases as they give context to the decisions Accent has made and continues to make.

## 1.2 2007-2013

In 2007/8 Accent made a loss of £9.8m which included a failed Building Schools for the Future bid costing £1m, and the Rural Solutions subsidiary making a loss of £10.6m. In addition the group failed to create a new subsidiary Accent South and 2 of the 3 RPs wanted to exit the group. Despite this Accent Group Development Consortium (AGC) did gain funding for 1,000 homes.

2008/9 was a year of consequences; the TSA downgraded Accent for governance and viability to amber and suspended the development programme. Accent closed down Rural Solutions, sold the PFI project and sold 115 homes in Stafford, however none of the funds raised were used to create income generating assets, and they were merely used to balance the finances. The year ended with a surplus of £3.4m but only due to the profit on the sale of the PFI.

2008/9 saw the appointment of Gordon Perry as the Chief Executive and Allan Smith as the Chair. This represented the start of the change in governance.

2008/9 was also a year of change as Accent took some major decisions which still form the backbone of our approach today. Accent decided to exit commercial activities and focus on the core housing business. Although the decisions were made then the implementation took several years.

2009/10 saw Accent begin the sale of the LIFT developments and the Accent Property Solutions business. There was a governance review which significantly put the chairs of all 3 RPs on the main board. The group made a surplus of £4.5m and the TSA removed the amber status and reinstated the development programme.

2010/11 Accent really began to turn around with a new vision of ‘Making a Difference…improving homes, communities and lives’, a new business plan and a renewed vision for housing. Accent sold the LIFT businesses, invested £30m in repairs and maintenance as it began to catch up on its investment in homes, completed the 1,000 homes through the consortium and ended the year with a surplus of £4.1m. This was accompanied by a target of making 10% per annum savings in support services for 5 years. On the governance front the link between the main board and the RPs was strengthened by the introduction of the annual conference which enabled key strategic decisions to be made together thereby increasing synergy across the group. In addition the national Accent Residents Panel was created giving our customers a voice with the main board.

2011/12 began to see the rewards for all the changes as Accent invested £24m in repairs and maintenance, the consortium obtained £15m of HCA funding for 663 homes and delivered a surplus of £1.6m as per the budget. The main achievements were on the governance side as the Fit for the Future case was approved which essentially meant moving from a ‘federated’ structure to a ‘true’ group structure, in particular adopting the virtual governance model. The year culminated in Accent receiving a governance judgement of G1.

2012/13 was a year of great change which laid the base for 2013/14. On the governance front there became a single group of board directors for the holding company and the 4 RPs simplifying decision making and reducing cost. A structure of 5 local customer service committees was created with a commitment to have at least 3 of the 7 members being customers.

Accent implemented a single ICT housing management system to complement the single Finance and HR systems which meant it was easier to have consistency across the group and greater visibility of information across the group. The outcome is one asset database which is integrated with the housing management system enabling the enhancement of the active asset management approach. This approach incorporates customer relationship and other metrics.

On the finance front there was a surplus of £2.3m in line with budget and overheads were delivering savings of £5.5m each year when compared to 2010/11. As a consequence the HCA viability rating was improved to V1.

2012/13 was dominated by a major review of Accent titled –Fit for the Future. Our analysis which included using Housemark benchmarking indicated that our costs were too high compared to the quality we delivered. The review had the following strategic aims:

- To restructure Accent Group, focussing staff resources where they would have the biggest impact on our residents, delivering a modern quality of service, and improving tenancy sustainability.
- To generate ongoing savings of £1.75m per annum, improving value for money so that we can invest to make more of a difference every year.

- To simplify governance by replacing the three existing registered provider (RP) boards and their committees and reviewing the roles of our local resident's panels and forums.
- To change the culture of Accent to one with performance management at its core....with a commitment to excellence and consistent service delivery.

## 1.3 2013/14

Fit for the future was approved unanimously by all the boards of Accent and as a consequence 2013/14 was about implementation. The implementation could be summarised as:

- **Simplifying the governance structure**

There are two aspects to this:

One: Introduction of 'virtual governance'

The core housing part of Accent consisted of the holding company and four RPs. Each of these five companies had a separate board and due to the intra group agreements Accent was effectively operating as a federation. This meant decision making was too slow. A policy change might be instigated by the holding company board, it would then be considered by the four RPs who would make suggested changes, this would then be reported to the group board who might accept the changes, a revised policy would then return to the RPs for their acceptance before returning to the holding company who would then finally approve the change. This could take seven months, clearly inefficient.

The new structure has the same eleven board members on all five company boards. This means issues can be considered once reducing decision making to one meeting. This is clearly a significant efficiency in staff time and avoids duplication of discussions. We believe this is the most effective example of 'virtual governance' in the sector as we have complete uniformity of board membership. This means that we are now operating as one housing organisation, which is bringing about huge cultural change to a 'One Accent'. Most staff would not and do not need to know about the different legal entities. The aspiration is to consolidate the three RPs into one entity however this will only be implemented if the cost is sensible as the remaining cost savings to Accent are probably only £50k per annum.

In addition to the board meeting structure required by the federated structure there were additional committees. The Accent group now only has an Audit committee, an Asset Management committee and five Customer Service Committees. This has reduced the number of meetings from 80 to 56 across the group.

The new board members were subject to a skills audit against an agreed mix for the new unified board. This drove some changes in 2012/13 which resulted in a stronger board. The board is independently assessed annually against its chosen code of governance. The board uses the NHF code of governance.

Two: Reduction in the number of companies in the group

In 2007/8, Accent had 47 companies with 40 board members. This structure cost £131k plus un-costed but significant support costs, by the end of 2013/14 the structure had reduced to 15 companies with 11 board members including one resident .In addition there are 31 committee members on the CSCs of which 11 are residents. The structure costs £175k reflects the investment in increased local accountability. It still requires support but much reduced. For example the audit fee for the structure has declined from £179k to £78k with further decreases forecast. This compares well with other large providers as in 2012/13 46 RPs had audit fees in excess of £100k. There are similar decreases for tax, legal and other support costs of c£50k. The complexity before added no value but cost in both financial and administrative resources. The complexity was difficult to explain and justify and therefore did not improve Accent's credibility with funders, the regulator and customers. There is now a simpler structure and a vision for further simplification see section six.

- **Removing operational complexity/duplication**

Fit for the future introduced a new staff organisational structure. This has had two impacts:

One: Adoption of functional structure
The decision was to adopt a functional structure which means that there is no duplication of roles in the group. For example there is one manager responsible for delivering the development programme. This means there is greater objectivity in deciding where to maximise the impact of development. There is one manager to oversee the six contact centres. This is bringing uniform standards to service delivery to customers and enables Accent to have someone with specialist skills whereas the individual RPs would struggle to afford that specialism. This approach has removed a lot of duplicate roles and enabled Accent to invest in some new roles particularly in the tenancy sustainability teams.

Two: Cultural change
The organisational change has improved cooperation across the organisation as people no longer see themselves as employees of a particular RP but as employees of Accent. This has created an atmosphere of looking for the single best way of doing an activity which is has reduced complexity and improved consistency. It is impossible to put a value on this but this is undoubtedly significant.

- **Achieving consistency across the organisation**

Having consistency of structure and approach has a number of efficiencies for Accent. These can be summarised as:

One: Standard set up for ICT systems and kit
Previously each RP had subtle differences in how they delivered services; this is no longer the case which means that the workflow processes in Active H were reduced from over 100 to 48. This clearly makes training and system maintenance simpler. It also has the benefit that there is easier business continuity as each area can cover for another as the systems are identical now. This makes service more robust.

Two: People doing the same roles in different geographical regions
We now have five regions delivering services consistently. This means for example the five ASB officers are able to support one another as systems and approach is consistent. It means there is no competition for my way is best bringing a cultural change of collaboration and constantly looking for the most effective approach. It also means the structure is robust with natural cover existing across the five regions. It is not possible to put a price on this but it has transformed the working approach across the group.

Three: Standard policies and procedures
Operating consistently has also meant that we are able to reduce the complexity of our policy framework. Previously operating as three RPs meant that we had slight variations in policy positions for a number of service areas. We are now able to efficiently agree a standard policy approach, leading to greater control and clarity of understanding, and increased simplification of processes. This has simplified the workflows in our ICT housing package, Active H and training delivery. The review of all policies commenced in 2013/14 and will be completed in 2014/15.

Four: Invest in areas

Accent is targeting sustainability of tenancies as a key measure. High turnover is financially inefficient and implies we are not supplying a product our customers want which is not a long term position. In 2013/14 2,141 of our tenancies were terminated in the year of which 380 were in their first year. Accent has utilised the saving from removing duplication in the structure to invest in specific teams to address this issue. There are five tenancy sustainability teams across Accent. They will add value by reducing the failure of tenancies in the first year and by understanding the reasons for those failures. This will influence policy in the future.

Five – A Personal, Modern and Better Service

Accent is restructuring its services to make them more effective and efficient. The new service will be more **personal**. This means the service will be tailored to the individual customer needs. The approach will be for over 80% of requests to be dealt with at first point of contact usually by phone but also by the internet in our contact centres. The next 16% (estimate) more difficult requests will be resolved by our surveyors/housing officers often during visits to customers' homes. The most difficult 4% (estimate) of requests will be resolved by specialist teams. The intention is that specialist teams are focussed on the most difficult requests but that routine issues are dealt with right first time. The intention is that over time the contact centres are able to deal with more contact.

The service will be **modern** by enabling residents to access the service by the internet, tablet and mobile phone. This will reduce cost and increase flexibility. The housing management system will be upgraded during 2014/15 to enable this; however Accent has already modernised its website to provide an optimal viewing experience across a wide range of devices, recognising the increase in the number of residents using tablets and mobile phones to go online.

The service will be **better** and this will be shown by improved customer satisfaction demonstrated by better STAR results.

In 2011 we began to measure our residents' satisfaction across the whole of Accent using STAR, rather than individually for each landlord as we had done in previous years. Our 2013 survey found that we have maintained satisfaction at a similar level to 2011, despite the inevitable disruptions to service during our transformational fit for the future programme. Our overall satisfaction score of 86% benchmarks as median quartile, and whilst we are pleased that satisfaction has not reduced during our restructure, we are committed to achieving top quartile.

Now that we have our new structure and service offer in place we are confident that we can improve tenant satisfaction levels to above 90% over the life of our 2014-2020 business plan.

## 2 2013/14 Self assessment – how are we doing at delivering our approach

# A: Return on assets / Active asset management

### A1: Active Asset Management

We have an active asset management strategy to ensure we are making the best use of our existing housing assets and to ensure we invest in new homes in sustainable locations. Decisions on investment, rationalisation and development are based on asset performance as a whole and take into consideration investment requirements, sustainability and geographical location. All proceeds from stock disposals together with any RCGF and DPF and VFM gains are ring fenced for the development and acquisition of new homes.

All the existing schemes are assessed using an asset matrix on the basis of their quality and their sustainability including void and arrears levels. This rated all the schemes into five categories, A-E. This approach means that schemes with a rating of D or E (16% of our schemes) are focussed on from an option appraisal approach. This means that decisions are made based on an Active Asset Management approach which includes quantitative and qualitative data .This approach can give surprising results and has redirected expenditure in 2013/14

**Achievements in 2013/2014**

In 2013/14 this strategy has led to a number of asset management decisions which have helped us to deliver our strategic aim of providing high quality homes to live in.

We used £1.055m of recycled capital grant fund (RCGF) to fund an additional 55 new rented homes without grant funding on our Franklands Development Phase 2 in Runnymede. This lead to the HCA investing a further £850,000 to provide a further 71 shared ownership homes on the same site.

In Surrey Heath we have decided to demolish one of our unpopular and obsolete older person's schemes at Windsor Court together with underutilised garages. We have secured HCA funding and will use £1.2m from our capital receipts pot to fund 8 new affordable rented homes on the site.

We have also redeveloped St Catherine's Hospital in Bradford, a derelict asset transferred to us as part of the LIFT deal which had lain empty for 10 years. We secured £550,000 of HCA grant for the development together with £120,000 of our RCGF. This encouraged both the Local Authority and English Heritage to invest further capital grants of £100,000 and £92,000 respectively. The scheme will provide 16 new rented homes in the heart of Manningham and will complement our investment in our existing stock in the area.

We have realised £900k receipts from the sale of 2 blocks of accommodation which were transferred to us as part of the PFI deal to provide staff accommodation for Leeds Mental Health Trust. Following the sale of the PFI these units were an underutilised asset which presented a significant, ongoing liability.

In South Cambridge we are in the final phase of our 10 year regeneration of the Fulbourn Estate. Working closely with the local authority and the community we have replaced poor quality largely mono tenure housing with a range of property types and tenures. With the exception of a modest amount of HCA funding in the early phase of the development the development has been self funded and utilised cross subsidy from market sale.

We have also commenced a stock portfolio disposal in the South East, our proposal is to dispose of 214 homes which are geographically remote from our office in Surrey Heath and re-provide 100 new homes closer to the office. Not only will this result in new homes but will also provide efficiency savings in terms of management and maintenance.

In 2010 we created a list of miscellaneous assets which we had inherited through assorted deals. These assets at that time had no clear strategy. Since then these assets have either been sold or developed so only one property remains. This approach has generated 96 new homes and a ring-fenced capital receipt pot of £8.3m income.

Asset sales are an important part of the development programme in 2014 but all sales are in areas of high demand.

**Development Consortium**

We continue to lead the Accent Group Development Consortium (AGC), which was established in 2006. Our role is not only to support to our own organisation but is to provide a range of programme and project management services to AGC partners. Working together provides the AGC with a critical mass and consequently access to a range of grant funding opportunities which otherwise would not be available on an individual basis. Between 2006/11 the AGC secured £200m of grant and completed 5,500 new and refurbished homes.

In 2013/2014 AGC partners not only continued to deliver projects allocated under the 2011/15 Affordable Homes programme but secured additional HCA funding through both the Care & Support fund and the Affordable Homes Guarantee Programme. At the start of the programme the AGC was contracted to deliver 663 homes using £15m of grant, we now anticipate that the outturn delivery will be 1,033 homes with £19.9m of grant indicating an overall reduction in grant per unit.

The cost of Accent leading the consortium and providing Programme management services is recovered from participating partners on a per property basis and for the last three years of the programme we have received fee income which means managing the consortium is cash neutral. The consortium arrangement offers us additional income but also offers partners excellent value for money as and when they use our services.

The AGC enables partners to share good practice and the cost of research and development of new design and products. It also allows developments to be transferred between consortium members where one partner cannot fulfil their commitments to ensure that the programme as a whole is delivered.

**Investment in sustainable homes**

We have invested £1.6m in our existing homes in Manningham this year, bringing the total investment in this area to £7m. This investment has allowed us to convert poorly performing and poor quality homes into highly sought after properties where turnover has reduced from 40% to 1%, maximising our income and ensuring we have a sustainable product for the future. This is also in line with the wider regeneration master plan for Manningham and compliments our investment in the development at St Catherine's.

We have also invested £4.4m in refurbishing existing sustainable homes in Easington this year, bringing our total investment to £8.2m and improving 254 homes.

**Voids**

During 2013/14 we began to split our voids between those that are business as usual and those that signal issues. This has focussed attention on voids and when combined with the asset management matrix has challenged the organisation to resolve issues. This has involved targeted investment and allocating for sale. The void loss has increased during the year to 2.1% (2012:1.7%). This is considered to be due to the distractions of FFTF and during the initial part of 2014/15 the position is improving.

## A2: Procurement of goods and services

Accent is a member of **Procurement for All** (PFA) a procurement consortium who use collective buying power to procure goods and services. 70% of planned and reactive maintenance is procured through PFA. Working collectively enables us to achieve value for money pricing and improved quality.

By using PFA in 2012/13 we achieved £2.9m of cashable savings, independently validated by the HCA equating to a saving of £155.93 per property. This represented 13% of the value of works procured through PFA. Whilst the savings for 2013/14 will not be validated until later in the year, we are confident that a similar level of savings will be achieved against the value of the works delivered through PFA during this period. PFA are also acknowledged as the procurement consortium with the significantly lowest membership fee and is the only one ‘strategically led by the members for the members’. This approach enables the members to freely share performance data on a common platform about commercially sensitive subjects. This improves negotiating positions for the members including Accent.

In addition we have saved £50k as we did not need to recruit a procurement manager. PFA have two procurement officers and an e-tender ICT solution which has helped to reduce the lead time on procurement from nine to four months.

We have robust contract management and this has enabled us to negotiate a £250k saving on the annual inflationary uplifts for repairs contracts.

## A3: Social Value

We are more than a bricks and mortar business – our vision is to make a difference not only through improving our homes but also individual lives and the wider community.

This community investment strategy (CIS) sets out how we will **support our residents to sustain their homes and communities** and achieve our vision**.**

In 2013/14 we have increased our investment in communities from c 2% to 4% of our turnover, a total budget of £3.4m.

Many of our residents are on low incomes or welfare benefits. As a result they are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the economic downturn, austerity measures and welfare reforms.

As a result, we have invested £880k in providing additional support to residents who need more than core services, through the introduction of tenancy sustainability teams. One of the key outcomes we hope to achieve through this investment is to drive down the turnover of our tenancies, particular within the first year of a tenancy. In addition to the positive impact this would have on individuals and on the stability of the community, there is also a saving to the business. If we reduce stock turnover by 1% or 200 re-lets at an average cost of £2,000, we have the potential to reduce our expenditure by up to £400K.Every housing officer has a budget of £9K (including £3K for estate improvements) to spend on scheme priorities as defined by their residents.

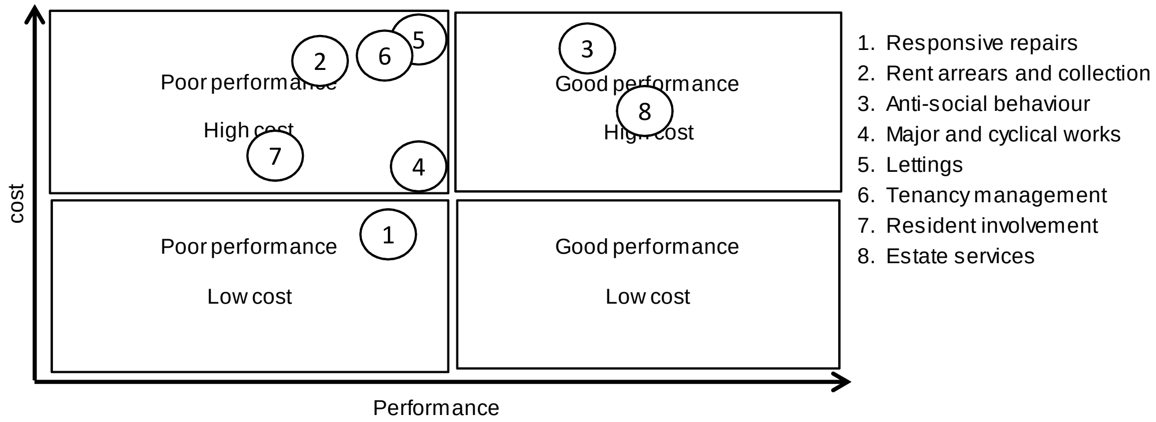
We invest £908k per year in our aids & adaptations service, which is often match funded by DRG from the LA. This helps to keep households in their homes at an average spend of £184 per property for minor jobs and £3,230 for major jobs. With an average of £1700 per job this is below the average void costs of £2,000. Sustaining tenancies in this way also reduces the burden on other publicly funded services.

Accent’s subsidiary Accent Regeneration and Community Partnerships (ARCP) has reviewed its training services in 2013/14. The review reflected the change in the market to ‘back loading’ payments for training courses. As a result ARCP decided to concentrate activity in Bradford and close its Middlesbrough and Burnley centres saving c£100k.

# B: Service costs and outcomes

## B1Service delivery - costs and quality

In 2012 we undertook a self-assessment of our value for money, utilising the Housemark benchmarking data for 2011/12. This demonstrated that the costs of our services were too high, and performance was not of sufficient quality. The Housemark cost / performance quadrant showed that 5 services out of 8 were deemed high cost / low quality, as can be seen in the diagram below;




**Accent Group**

A new **personal, modern and better** service offer was launched in 2014/15 as one of the key outcomes from Fit for the Future, supported by the new delivery structure.

Our patch based Housing Officers are responsible for arrears intervention but we have also introduced specialist teams for income management and tenancy sustainability support, to ensure that we continue to protect our rental income in the face of competing pressures for our residents' resources. The outcome of these changes will be measured closely in 2014/15.

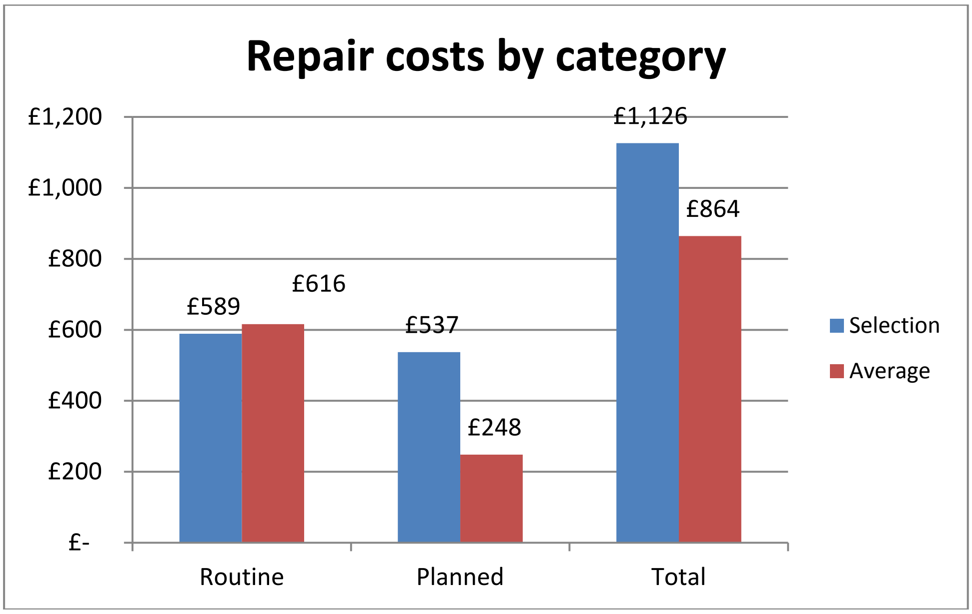
Over 80% of resident contacts are made over the telephone. To improve the quality and efficiency of our call management we have created a contact centre in each of our regional bases. The creation of the contact centres has reduced the number of customer contact staff in Accent from 100 to 58 staff. Access and quality have also improved. We have introduced 0345 numbers to reduce the costs of calling for residents and extended the opening hours for telephone contact. Since the launch of the new service we have reduced the average answer speed by 4 seconds, and increased the answer rate from 90% to 95%.

40% of contacts are about repairs. We have employed two extra advisors in the existing repairs contact centre which previously managed calls for the northern regions. As a result the centre has taken on the repairs calls for our remaining regional bases, bringing consistency of service and saving £25K on contract costs as one of the regions previously contracted this service out.

We implemented our Customer Relationship Management system to record and track all customer contacts, giving us a comprehensive view of our customers. Our aim is to use this information to inform service development as not all consultation needs to be active.

The single repairs contact centre has standardised the opening hours for our customers so all areas have the same access to Accent. We have extended opening hours to Monday to Friday 8-8 and Saturday 8-12 which means we are now open 64 hours a week. This increase has been delivered within the same budget but utilising more part time roles.

The management cost per property is £755 compared to a peer group of 16 similar sized organisations of £1,127 which reflects our focus on this area. The routine repair costs were £589 compared to £616 for the peer group however for planned the cost was £537 per property versus £248 from the peer group. This represents the high levels of investment being made in our northern stock as we aim to provide consistent standards for all our residents where there is demonstrable, long term demand. The data for these figures was derived from statutory accounts for 2012/13.

The detailed analysis in the statutory accounts for 2013/14 shows an increase in the management costs but this reflects one off redundancy costs of £816k and increased pension recovery payments of £200k. This area is being further analysed to highlight opportunities to improve in 2014/15.

Overall the impact of FFTF was to further reduce cost. The challenge of 2014/15 is to raise quality with that reduced cost base. This will address the Housemark assessment that Accent is high cost low quality.

## B2: People

The people who work for us are one of our most valuable assets. Their skills and knowledge are paramount to improving services. However, we have been challenging on ensuring that we operate in the most efficient way. We fundamentally reviewed the organisation structure in 2013/14 through our Fit for the Future (FFTF) programme

In the past year we have reduced our workforce by 32 as a direct result of FFTF, saving around £1.55m which will increase to £1.75m by 2015/16. In addition further staff savings of £922k were generated as a result of changing service delivery in 2012/13 within ARCP and arrangements for site staff. This represents a decrease of 16%. We have focussed our resources on service delivery and the majority of the FFTF savings were realised from senior managers (46%) and support roles in head office (38%). This enabled us to slightly increase resources deployed on customer services. The cost of redundancy was £893k which was contained within the salary budget for 2013/14 but did add to the management costs for 2013/14. The annual saving is ring-fenced to build new properties.

FFTF was implemented in all services except for sheltered and caretaking where it was decided that separate detailed reviews would be undertaken in 2014/15.

The total salary cost excluding pensions has declined year on year as follows:

| Year | Cost £000 |
|---|---:|
| 2010/11 | 18,663 |
| 2011/12 | 15,757 |
| 2012/13 | 15,634 |
| 2013/14 | 15,124 |
| 2014/15 budget | 12,652 |

The workforce had a variety of terms and conditions as a result of its history. The consequence of this is that HR advice and payroll changes can be different for two people in the same circumstances. This is clearly not efficient or equitable. During FFTF the workforce was encouraged to sign up to the latest terms and conditions and the current position is as follows:

| | Pre | Post |
|---|---|---|
| 2013 T&Cs | 297 | 515 |
| 2010 T&Cs | 244 | 10 |
| Older | 10 | 1 |
| | 551 | 526 |

FFTF was completed by using standard contracted redundancy payments with no enhancements or incentives. There were no tribunals during the process. This simplification has enabled the HR team to reduce in size to four from six a saving of £100k. The plan is to complete harmonisation of the T&Cs during 2014/15.

During the FFTF review salaries were benchmarked externally using a specialist company and changes made. Accent has adopted the approach of having a median pay strategy. A review of salaries in Social Housing (February 2014) showed Accent was in the first quartile in terms of staff cost per unit owned and managed when benchmarked against the top 45 English Housing Associations

**B3: Pensions**

Pensions remain a significant risk to this organisation. During 2013/14 we dealt with the following issues, across the three defined benefit schemes we participate in:

<u>Accent Group Pension Scheme:</u>

- In conjunction with the Accent Group Pension Scheme Trustee Flexible Apportionment Arrangements were implemented in relation to Accent Amalgamated Ltd, Accent Regeneration & Community Partnerships Ltd and Accent Regeneration Ltd. This enabled us to rationalise the group structure and realise real cost savings and also lead to the scheme being able to reduce its PPF levy, freeing more cash to be invested to secure members benefits.
- Accent Asset Limited was formally unattached to the scheme, again allowing savings to be made.
- The Trustee carried out market testing of actuarial, administration and investment advisory services, leading to real savings from the appointment of JLT Benefits Solutions Limited to replace Capita Employee Benefits (Consulting) Limited.

Insurance cover for death in service benefit was also market tested by the Trustee leading to Aviva being retained but on improved terms.

<u>Social Housing Pension Scheme (SHPS):</u>

In order to reduce risk and cost to Accent we exited the “growth section” of the SHPS scheme which allowed us to cap and settle in full the liability arising from the cessation debt (commonly known as the s75 debt).

Surrey Pension Fund:

We have identified the potential s75 debt arising in relation to this scheme and have entered into dialogue with the scheme aimed at capping and settling our position in the next 12 -18 months.

Auto Enrolment

Accent’s staging date was 1st January 2014, which was deferred to 1st April 2014 to enable a smooth implementation. The Social Housing Pension Scheme (SHPS) defined contribution section was selected as the best value provider of a scheme for workplace pensions given it’s economies of scale and expertise in the housing sector.

By dealing with these issues and simplifying the number of companies adhered to the Accent Group Pension Scheme the pension protection fund levy has decreased to £66k in 2013/14 from over £111k in 2009/10. It should decline further in 2014/15 which means more of the contributions are going into the fund.

As a consequence Accent reduced its exposure to s75 crystallisation issues by circa £18m. As ever the true cost is greater as an unplanned crystallisation could cause a breach of a covenant.

**B4: Offices**

The geographic nature of Accent has meant that it had a large number of offices which it operated out of. A detailed review was undertaken and as a consequence we have concentrated services in a central office with five hubs. We own/long lease four of these buildings. We have retained three satellite offices and closed four offices. This has resulted in savings for 2014/15 of c£100k plus two of the offices that were closed will be converted to accommodation generating 8 additional homes.

# C: Finance

## C1: Treasury position

We appointed new external treasury consultants during the year delivering improved services. The analysis of our treasury approach was that it is in line with sector best practice. We continue to deliver the treasury service in-house with minimal external assistance. The average cost of capital has increased marginally to 4.95% (from 4.9%) in 2013/14 due to the mix of fixes that has operated. The cost of capital is average for the sector as shown by the Social Housing review in May 2014.

The total amount of cash resources declined during the year in line with the budget and financial plan. The group increased its loan repayments in the year in line with the loan requirements so that two of the three major funders are now in repayment with one remaining on a ‘repayment holiday’ for one more year. The debt per unit at £25.6k per social unit is average as shown by the Beevers and Struthers review of the top 100 RPs; however that debt is spread across properties with lower rent levels than many RPs so the interest bill remains significant. Interest accounts for £1 in every £4 collected although the loans are now being repaid this position will remain consistent for the next four years as the mix of fixes changes and LIBOR is expected to increase. This will remain a challenge to Accent. The amount of variable debt is 22% at the year end with a number of long term fixes in place which mitigate interest rate increases.

The gearing of Accent remains high on a debt to assets basis at 60% (2012: 62%) but is improving due to the repayments of debt. The debt to turnover measure shows that Accent is at 4 times with the sector average at 4.5 times. The covenant measures for gearing are met with a specified buffer. The interest covenants are also complied with again including a buffer.

During 2014/15 Accent will adopt a single supplier of day to day banking services which will simplify processing within the group and reduce cost.

The financial plans which support the business plan 2014/20 show that no further funding will be required to support our existing services. There is significant security available as our existing loans are over secured and our new stock is unencumbered.

The operating margin is 19% (2012:21%). This is below the sector average of 26% and reflects the extent to which Accent has dealt with legacy financial issues over the last two years. These issues have no cash impact but they affect the surplus.

### C2: Contribution to UK Exchequer

Accent makes a significant contribution to the UK exchequer in terms of the amount of tax we pay. In 2013/14, we paid £14.3million of VAT on the goods and services we bought for use in the business. Of this, we were only entitled to reclaim £150k from HMRC. So, our net VAT contribution to HM Treasury was £14.15million.

We also pay significant amounts of employer’s NI and have a number of other statutory obligations across a wide range of taxes. In 2013/14 it amounted to £1.2m.

So, in addition to the excellent work we do as a social landlord, in broader terms, we also play a valuable role in the UK economy. Making sure that we manage our tax position accurately and effectively ensures that we are both good “corporate citizens”, and, are able to maximise the funds available to allow us to invest in our business.

# D: Governance

## D1: Business plan -2009/14

We have clear business planning processes led by the board and executive team. 2013/14 was the last year of the current five year strategic plan, which was established following an in depth review of our strategic aims and priorities.

The business plan was clearly focussed on value for money, with the key themes of reducing our exposure to risk, significantly increasing the investment in our property portfolio, improving efficiency through streamlining our governance and operational structures and improving service quality and performance.

As a result we have withdrawn from commercial activities; invested over £216m in our existing stock; developed 1,432 new homes; made efficiency savings and reduced our operational costs by cumulative and recurring £7m per annum; and, achieved a virtual consolidation which has allowed us to build an organisational structure and service offer which is more personal, modern and better.

## D2: Business plan -2014/20

In 2013 we considered different strategic directions with the board and its committees facilitated by external challengers and concluded on the strategic direction for the new business plan for 2014/20.

The key themes identified have a strong value for money focus - sustainability and improving the quality of our homes and support for key communities.

Our financial plans ensure that the costs of delivering our strategic objectives are budgeted for. We have a five year financial planning cycle, and this is backed by a higher level 30 year financial plan to ensure that the costs of delivering our strategic objectives are budgeted for. The 30 year financial plan is undertaken utilising the BRIXX financial modelling package. The plans showed that the business plan was affordable.

The plan was stress tested for individual risks including rent arrears and interest rate increases and then tested for multiple risks. Clearly the multiple risks do eventually break the financial position but demonstrated to the board the financial headroom and the key measures to monitor. This showed that by regularly reviewing the financial plan issues are manageable.

We have a detailed, zero based budget model for 2013/14. The budget model is regularly presented to board throughout the budget preparation period and is a dynamic document. We undertake sensitivity analysis during its preparation and at all stages of review. The FFTF changes have simplified the cost structure which will enable benchmarking between regions from 2014/15.

## D3: Performance Scrutiny

This was an area we identified was weaker than we would want. FFTF changed the governance and staff structure to address this. The impact is expected to be seen in improved performance and VFM in 2014/15.

Our new governance structure has five regional Customer Service Committees who have four formal meetings each year, supplemented by informal meetings. A standardised agenda for the formal meetings ensures that performance management and scrutiny at a local level is given prominence and is consistently applied.

We have also strengthened the links between the committees and the Accent Residents' Panel. Membership of the panel is now drawn jointly from regional scrutiny mechanisms and the regional committees. They act under the delegated authority of the Board to:

- Advise and assist on reviewing the groups strategic plan;
- Drive improvements in policy or service delivery across the group; and,
- Scrutinise the effectiveness of strategies across the group and agree priorities for change or improvements.

The panel meet formally four times per year with attendance from the CEO and the Chair of Accent.

The business plan incorporated specific performance measures detailing a steady progression to 2020. The measures are by each hub enabling performance scrutiny to local levels. The measures link to the budget and financial plans. The intention is to be top quartile by 2020.

# E: Value for money gains

## E1: Summary of impact in 2013/14

The table below summarises those elements of VFM which can be put into a table format.

| | Service/Time impact | Financial impact |
|---|---|---|
| Reducing the number of board and committee meetings | 80 to 56 | Reduction in back office staff by 2 |
| Company reduction<br>Audit fee<br>Other professional fees | | <br>£179k to £78k<br>Similar decreases |
| FFTF | Consistency of roles/structures across the group<br>One way of doing activities/ standard policies | £1.75m on-going annual savings<br>Net reduction in staff of 32<br>Investment in 5 tenancy sustainability teams<br>Total salary cost has decreased for fifth year in |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | a row by £2.47m |
| Procurement | | Savings of c£3m expected |
| RCGF | Delivered extra 63 homes through use of RCGF in South<br><br>Remodelled two difficult properties in North to resolve long standing issues. | |
| Customer contact hubs | Posts standardised and reduced from 100 to 58 | Opening hours increased to 8-8 Mon-Fri and 8-12 Sat. |
| HR team | Uniform terms and conditions, policies | 6 Staff to 4 |
| Office review | 8 new homes to be generated from offices | £80k saved and £31k additional income |

The overarching focus of savings is to invest savings into building new homes.

# 3 Plan for 2014/15 or getting the benefits from 'Fit for the Future'

Accent is a business of three elements; customers, homes for those customers to live in and people to deliver the services. During 2014/15 Accent will develop these elements by building on FFTF:

- Customers: Reviewing key services to ensure they align with our current and future customers needs i.e. Sheltered, caretaking, supported; plus delivering on our Personal Modern and Better service offer
- Homes: reviewing the asset management strategy and property standard to ensure they are fit for purpose and affordable; and
- People: launching our new people strategy

## 3.1 Business plan 2014/20

The new business plan has clear milestones for each of its six years. These milestones will demonstrate improved performance and reduced cost through that period up to 2020.

For 2014/15 we have established a new bottom up target setting approach which also aligns our key targets for example income collection to the budget setting process. The new performance management framework for staff means that their individual objectives will align with the strategic business plan targets.

We plan to further simplify our strategic performance reporting whilst increasing the depth of operational performance reporting through a review of performance measures in 2014. This will build on the introduction of the five Customer Service Committees whose role is to focus on performance and hold local management to account. This approach is generating much clearer focus on performance at a regional level.

## 3.2 Procurement of goods and services

2014/15 is an important year for procurement for Accent. As we prepared for FFTF we organised our major contracts so they expired at the same time across the group. This was to enable group-wide procurement where this offers best value for money.

This has also given board an opportunity to reconsider the fundamental principles of our **procurement strategy.** Given our re-structure we can choose to procure services for all areas together or as five regional entities. Given our scale we can opt to procure via distinct work streams or to consolidate them. The procurement strategy 2015-2020 will define our approach and it will bring the best value for money when procuring goods and services.

The upcoming major procurement activity is in two distinct areas; planned and reactive maintenance.

This year we will work with Procurement for all (PFA) to re-procure the contracts for the following planned investments:

- Kitchens & Bathrooms
- Central Heating

- Windows & Doors
- General Build

In order to drive value for money through the procurement we will look at: consolidating all the work streams into one contract to ease operational processes and provide economies of scale; splitting labour and materials costs to create the opportunity to buy materials in bulk at reduced rates; and minimising the number of suppliers by adopting a national or regional approach to ensure consistent service standards and reduced operating costs. We have currently got a number of suppliers and we will be able to use comparisons of existing performance and cost to inform our decision together with the external benchmarking provided by PFA. The use of PFA as our procurement partner means that we do not have an extensive in-house team and the costs associated with procurement, as a result, are shared across the consortium members.

In relation to the reactive service we currently have individual repairs contract arrangements for all five regions and these are being met by four contractors, all on different contract arrangements. At the end of 2014/15 our separate contracts for repairs will come to an end and this gives us the opportunity to go out to the market as a single purchaser. Our procurement strategy will define whether it is best to procure these via five regional contracts or one national. It will also consider and decide whether to do so via PFA framework contracts or term partnering contracts. This decision will be based on how best to achieve value for money.

We are aiming to reduce the number of suppliers who deliver our repairs services in order to reduce the complexity of contract management and the higher transactional costs of processing multiple invoices. We will be exploring alternative contract arrangements including price per property/price per void, price per task and a combined approach. In addition, we have just moved to a single contact centre for repairs services so it is easier for Accent to drive consistent and higher quality of performance from our suppliers.

## 3.3 Asset management

We will spend £36.2m this year on repairs and maintenance. We are developing our investment matrix further to ensure that we optimise our investment in our assets. The new matrix will build on the A-E model to enable more accurate understanding of current and future costs and performance. It will look at property condition, financial returns, lettability, energy efficiency and annual component replacement costs as well as resident satisfaction and housing management indicators. Over 60% of all stock has been surveyed in the last 5 years.

The **asset management matrix** measures a range of factors.

| **Factor** |
|---|
| Residents satisfaction within overall quality of home |
| Fuel poverty |
| Staff qualitative assessment |

| |
|---|
| Contact centre data |
| Complaints received |
| Letting refusals |
| Satisfaction with neighbourhood |
| Number of repairs |
| Number of voids |
| Void length |
| Rent received |
| Maintenance costs (responsive, cyclical, management) |
| Service costs |
| Digital access |
| Surplus |

These factors are weighted to take into account the relative importance of each. Once all the factors are applied this allows us to categorise our assets.

This results in assets being categorised and the current breakdown is as follows based on 13/14 stock data:

| **Category** | **% stock** | **Number of homes** | **Action** |
|---|---:|---:|---|
| **Green** | 95 | 20,148 | None |
| **Amber** | 2 | 341 | Further analysis/monitor |
| **Red** | 1 | 189 | Options appraisal |
| **Black** | 2 | 214 South<br>329 Easington | Disposal process underway |

Accent manages a widespread stock portfolio and this brings benefits in that we are not exposed to a single set of factors but it also brings challenges. The main challenge is to keep ahead of housing market failure in terms of both asset type and area. Recent challenges of this nature have been:

- Housing market challenges in the NE as shown by falling demand, and;
- Asset type failure in Manningham as shown by falling demand for a type of property; bedsits and small flats converted from large houses.

Both these examples are being or have been addressed and our approach to asset appraisal would flag up future challenges before they become irreversible. This avoids major investment being made into stock without a long term future and board making an informed decision that the expenditure, as in Manningham, and resultant positive impact on the community justifies the investment.

This illustrates that our process not only allows us to test the financial impact of investment in our homes but also consider the wider value for money aspects such as the generation of social value.

The investment planning team, who are responsible for all asset data, will then produce an investment programme for stock that passes the sustainability test. This ensures that investment is not made in assets without a long term future which would not represent good value for money.

### 3.4 Development

We have ring fenced £5m of capital receipts for the provision of new homes. Whilst these receipts have been from miscellaneous sales in the past, our virtual consolidation will enable us to look at our property portfolio across the group and identify the outlying properties we want to target for disposal. Accent operates across 75 local authority areas and has assessed each on the sustainability of their housing markets. Our bid for Affordable Housing Programme 2015-2018 reflects our focus on sustainable housing markets as demonstrated by high, long term demand. These are mostly, though not exclusively, in the South and East. The programme also reflects our understanding of the housing markets in the North where there is not high demand but changing demand which is more likely to be met through remodelling rather than growth.

We will rationalise our stock around our core operating areas, further improving the cost and quality of service delivery as well as overall value for money. In 2014/15 we are disposing or four schemes in the south. In line with our finance strategy the proceeds will be used to secure revenue by development and/or the acquisition of replacement properties.

We already have a standard specification and will seek to align products more closely across both Development and Maintenance functions. We are also considering developing a limited range of standard house type which could be utilised on the majority of sites. This would provide consistency of product but also ensure greater cost predictability.

The two current major developments involve outright sales of 46 homes and the shared ownership sales of 84 homes in 2014/15. This is a risk but to date sales continue to be made off plan and there are no properties awaiting sale at present.

Accent will continue to lead the Accent Group Development Consortium and has lead the AHP bid to build 777 homes across the consortium partners. The consortium deliver value for money programme management services to all its partners by sharing one team, based in Accent for which Accent receives a fee.

## 3.5 Service delivery - costs and quality

2013/14 saw Accent introduce five contact centres for general queries and one repairs contact centre. As a consequence Accent will close the 4 local offices saving £80k per annum and will be converting some of this office space into 8 new homes generating income of £31k per annum. The local offices had low footfall and analysis and customer consultation enabled Accent to conclude this approach would have no detrimental impact on service.

The repairs contact centre now also provides general query advice outside the 9-5 core hours of the five local contact centres. This increased flexibility for customers will be assessed to determine whether the service represents value for money. We will also implement a virtual platform for customer contact which will ensure consistent cover in periods of high demand and enable us to train the bulk of the team without disruption to service. The intention is that this service is able to deal with 80% of customer queries first time.

Outside of our contact centre hours we currently use three out of hours contact suppliers. We will be re-procuring this service as a single supply to improve consistency, improve links between Accent and the external provider and improve value for money.

We are conscious that online transactions are increasing and are currently 4% of all traffic. We are looking to improve the range and ease of use of on-line services by introducing a resident's portal and using digital communications. Our aim is for 30% of transactions to be carried out digitally to reduce our costs over the next three years.

We will also invest in technology to improve our approach to mobile working, increasing the flexibility and productivity of our front line staff.

In addition we are undertaking a review of our tenancy types. We currently have 38 and the challenge is does this variety improve the service to our customers or not, and is that service worth the additional cost of supporting the complexity.

We are implementing a new management information strategy which will widen our use of benchmarking, using comparisons of service and standards outside the sector.

A service charge review is also being undertaken to ensure that the process is consistent and fair to all residents.

## 3.6 Social Value

Our business plan for 2014-2020 reaffirms our commitment to generating social value through our activity, aiming to spend up to 5% of our turnover annually on activities which support our residents and add value to the wider community. The introduction of a tenancy sustainability team in each of the five regions is part of this investment.

One of our challenges for the future is to develop consistent metrics or a method of calculating the social return on investment (SROI) for our community investment activities in order to demonstrate the added value from our investment.

We also need to ensure that we align our asset management, procurement and community investment strategies in order to maximise our opportunities to generate social value. This could be achieved via contractual arrangement with major suppliers, by levying major contracts to fund social value activity or by achieving best value on all our contracts and investing the savings in activity that adds social value or investment in our communities. This approach will be considered by the board as part of the procurement strategy to 2020.

In 14/15 we will continue to pursue our aim to **support our residents to sustain their homes and communities** through engagement, sustainability, investment and training.

The biggest change in approach will be to move from a training programme focused on employment to a programme focused on sustainability. This is as a result of the changing needs of our residents as demonstrated by lower unemployment in our core areas (particularly in younger age groups) and an increased need for support in core skills such as digital and financial inclusion as a result of welfare reform changes.

Our ability to deliver this offer to all residents across all regions means that it represents much better value for money but also provides a wider impact on our resident population. Helping people to stay in their homes reduces turnover, reduces voids and reduces rent loss but also delivers the social benefit of a more stable community.

The detail of how we will meet this objective is within our **community investment strategy (CIS) 2015-2020.**

## 3.7 People

Our next step is to review our People Strategy with a view to improving staff capability though training, learning and development and strengthening the golden thread between organisational and individual objectives though better performance management.  The strategy will enable a "**professional, enthusiastic and valued workforce** to be developed**.**

A training programme of internal and external training costing £300k will deliver management development to all managers across the organisation, a leadership programme to the leadership team and training ICT systems to all staff. There is also planned training on housing management and customer service for our frontline staff. The cost is less than 0.5% of turnover representing good value for money.

The plan is to ensure all employees are on the same terms and conditions during 2014/15. It is also the plan to transfer all weekly paid to monthly paid. This will simplify auto enrolment compliance, reduce the number of pay rolls to four from five and reduce the processing. Together these two things will aid efficiency.

The board approved a pay rise for 2014/15 of 2%. This is after 3 years with only one consolidated award of 1%. The board also adopted the Living wage from 2014/15. This affected 31 people and will cost £31k with on-costs.

## 3.8 Organisation and governance

The group currently has 15 companies. The plan is to reduce this by four companies in 2014/15 by closing/transferring the assets of those businesses to Accent Corporate Services/ Accent Foundation. The final element of the governance simplification project will be consolidating the three RPs to create one entity delivering housing services and owning all the stock in the group. This will reduce administrative costs by c£50k. The main advantage is that it will simplify treasury management for the Accent group.

## 3.9 Performance Scrutiny

In 2013/14 we established regional responsibility for resident scrutiny; however more work is required in this important area. In 2014/15 we will concentrate on achieving our VFM by completing the implementation of our resident engagement strategy at a regional level. This includes developing more effective scrutiny mechanisms.

Whilst we expect some commonality of approach, we do not plan to prescribe what these mechanisms should be. In this way we will enable innovation and give our teams the flexibility to develop what works best for their residents and in their locality.

# 4 Assessment

Accent has been through a truly transformational year which has now enabled us to put behind the low point of 2007/08. In 2013/14 it achieved V1/G1 for the first time. The value for money gains made during this period are complex but total over £7m of on-going efficiencies. Accent however, recognises there is more to do and section three details nine areas for improvement in 2014/15.

Accent has taken significant decisions in 2013/14 which will reduce the cost of its services by more than 10%. At the same time overall customer satisfaction has remained steady at 86%. We will be able to assess our new structure and cost base against other organisations via external benchmarking at the end of 2014/15 when we have a full year's impact of all the changes, however we know our back office has decreased by 20% in 2013/14. At the same time Accent is undertaking individual service reviews for its supported housing, older persons and estate caretaking services which involve self analysis and benchmarking against best in class organisations. This will enable Accent to demonstrate improved value for money in its service charges to customers. The costing of individual services has been difficult for Accent when it was a federated structure with each organisation working independently, now as One Accent we will be able to assess ourselves and benchmark much more effectively. This will be a major change for Accent in 2014/15.

Accent has a business plan and supporting financial strategy which focuses value for money gains on growth. In 2013/14 Accent completed 66 new homes and has 400 in construction. The asset management plan has clear targets for development and sales of identified non core properties.

Overall Accent believes it meets the VFM standard but is self aware enough to recognise that more needs to be done particularly around understanding the cost of delivering individual services.

**Appendix 1 – List of detailed examples of value for money decisions.**

This list is intended to be illustrative of the type of day to day activities which are driving value for money alongside the major projects such as ‘Fit for the Future’. Each manager has a VFM target on their annual appraisal and this list is how those managers demonstrate their delivery of this objective.

This list is illustrative rather than complete as a complete list would be too long.

| Region | Team | What Action Was Taken | Cash Efficiencies | Added Value | Evidence | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NE | Housing | Reprocurement of communal cleaning and window cleaning contracts for neighbourhood schemes in Middlesbrough | £15,926.92 | Consolidated into individual lots rather than a single contract to encourage local, community based SMEs to tender | Reduced costs | 16/09/2013 |
| Yorks | Home Ownership | Reprocurement of gardening contract for a scheme. | n/a | Increased resident satisfaction with VFM of service. | Complaints reduced | 01/04/2013 |
| Yorks | Home Ownership | Reprocurement of gardening contract for a scheme. | n/a | Increased resident satisfaction with VFM of service. | Complaints reduced | 01/04/2013 |
| CTH | Facilities | Renegotiated service contract for lift maintenance to improve quality and reduce cost. | £1,693.48 | | Reduced costs | 16/04/2013 |
| Nene | Repairs & Maintenance | Addendum to contract for gas servicing to formalise the servicing of smoke detectors which has been happening informally. | £74,785.64 | Minimises inconvenience to residents by combining into one visit | Budget not increased despite higher service level | 01/04/2013 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NE, NW & Yorks | Repairs & Maintenance | Negotiated non-application of annual RPI uplift for replacement doors/window contract | £10,000.00 | | Reduced costs | 23/05/2013 |
| CTH | Asset Management | Cancelled legacy contract (Housing Associations Performance Management) which has been superceded by NHBC. Contract cost c£33775.85 and had 2 years to run. | £15,548.00 | NHBC offered higher level of benefit to Accent | Reduced costs | 04/06/2013 |
| CTH | Finance Team | Application made for business rate relief on behalf of NE Region | £32,593.20 | | Reduced costs | 04/06/2013 |
| NW | Repairs & Maintenance | Negotiated 10 % discount on high value (>10K) void works with supplier | £4,000.00 | | Reduced costs | 18/06/2013 |
| CTH | | Provided specialist systems training (Agresso) using an internal resource rather that procuring external training | £3,500.00 | | Reduced costs | 18/06/2013 |
| NE & Yorks | Repairs & Maintenance | External funding obtained (Governments ECO funding scheme) towards the cost of externally cladding and insulating two schemes | £250,371.00 | | Budget not increased despite higher service level | 04/07/2013 |
| CTH | Communities & Assets | Obtained Employment Opportunities Fund (EOF) wage subsidy to part fund new post. | £10,920.00 | | Achieved more for less than expected budget increase. | 21/06/2013 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CTH | Communities & Assets | Renegotiated contract for lone worker device and monitoring service. Consolidated 3 separate contacts. | £1,891.20 | | Reduced costs | 23/08/2013 |
| CTH | Facilities | Established coterminous contracts for hygiene services, with consistent prices for service and equipment across the whole group. | N/A | Reduction in management costs as only one supplier to manage and one period of contract review. | Budget not increased despite higher service level | 09/09/2013 |
| CTH | Housing | Negotiated contract extension for cleaning and window cleaning based on current pricing and terms and conditions, saving inflationary uplift. | £548.00 | | Reduced costs | 18/12/2013 |
| CTH | Communities & Assets | Obtained Employment Opportunities Fund (EOF) wage subsidy to part fund 7 new posts. | £70,000.00 | | Achieved more for less than expected budget increase. | 18/12/2013 |
| NW | Procurement | Reprocurement of electricity contract to add to group contract | £4,342.00 | | Reduced costs | 21/06/2013 |
| CTH | Procurement | Reprocurement of electricity contract to add to group contract | £5,459.00 | | Reduced costs | 13/01/2014 |