

60th Anniversary

Waltham Forest Housing Association
Annual Report to Tenants 2023 - 2024



Racist abuse and rioting

Many of us are still recovering from the disorder that took place earlier this summer.

When the tragedy of the killing of three young girls in Southport was hijacked by the far right to promote extremes of racism and violence on our streets, it affected people all over the country.

Whilst the worst of the rioting took place in communities outside London, the scenes played out on everyone's TV and social media channels. Attacks on the police, racist abuse and arson attempts on mosques and asylum seeker accommodation were designed to intimidate every person of colour and particularly Muslims.

The thugs who took part in this rioting are rightly paying the price as the courts work through hundreds of people charged – alongside the keyboard warriors who joined in from the sidelines with violent threats and extremes of abuse.

The UK has seen rioting before, but never so well promoted and co-ordinated through social media. It has been terrifying to see how quickly a deliberately false claim – that the Southport attacker was a Muslim asylum seeker (he is a 17-year-old born in Wales) – could be used by far right activists to whip up hatred and riots. And it has been shameful to see their views and false claims being amplified by Elon Musk,

the owner of X (formerly Twitter), the far right's Tommy Robinson and the leader of Reform UK, Nigel Farage. We will no longer have a presence on X.

We know that some of our tenants will still be feeling upset and worried. But there is another story. As the riots receded, the volunteers came out – to clean up streets, rebuild mosque walls and reconnect with their neighbours. Then people came onto streets across the country to demonstrate their support for their communities and for refugees – vastly outnumbering the far right protests. In Walthamstow, we saw a dignified show of solidarity, with an estimated 10,000 people.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, told *The Guardian*: "It was fantastic and a source of pride to me that you saw thousands of people coming together yesterday. Different backgrounds, different ethnicities, different religions, different faiths, showing unity and allyship to those of us who have been targeted."

Where we stand

As we said in our last annual report – we are proud of our city and our borough. We recognise that both were built on migration. We want to support people seeking refuge within the UK. As a provider of homes in Waltham Forest, we will do what we can.

Our staff and Board reflect the diversity of our tenants, the borough and London. Many of us have lived experience of social housing. We are united in our commitment to stand up to racism and have signed up to SHARP (the Social Housing Anti-Racism Pledge). Our Board member, Ayo Akinwale has also been elected to take on the role of Board lead on our work around equality, diversity and inclusion.

We see it as our job to play a part in creating a fairer and safer community for all. We are a strongly values-based organisation and our values of Respect, Empowerment, Ambition, Care and Honesty inform everything we do, every day. Respect is particularly important to us – we are an anti-racist organisation with zero tolerance to discrimination.

So we want to pass on the message that if you are experiencing racism or discrimination, or if you feel we are falling short in the way we provide you with services, please let us know.

In line with our values and our vision, we are working to deliver a future where everyone, in every community we serve, has a safe, truly affordable home and great life chances, in a society where they are valued and respected.

Chair and CEO's review: 2023-24

Across the social housing sector, 2023-24 was a busy and challenging year. For WFHA, it was also a year with a great deal to be proud of.

We celebrated our 60th anniversary in 2023, looking back over an impressive history of providing good quality and truly affordable rented homes for people living in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. We held a special event at Vestry House in August, to bring together our tenants, staff, Board members and partners to reflect on our past and look forward to our future.

Reaching 60 was far from our only achievement during the year. We were awarded Investors in People Gold, in recognition of our ongoing work to develop and manage our staff in a culture of care and inclusivity. In their report, our inspectors noted that most of our staff had experience of living in social housing and that they are committed to our values and the work we do for tenants.

During the summer of 2023, we carried out our first tenant perception satisfaction survey, using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures brought in by our regulator. We were pleased to get an overall satisfaction score of 77% - higher than the average for our peers. The survey gave us really useful feedback, which we are already using to help us deliver on our commitment to provide better services for our tenants.

The survey was just one of a raft of changes introduced with the launch of new 'consumer regulations' – the standards we have to meet, following the introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

We spent much of the year successfully carrying out a comprehensive review of our services and policies to ensure we would be compliant and deliver the outcomes expected of us, once the Act became law on 1 April 2024. Our work included adopting the Ombudsman's latest Complaints Handling Code. This year's annual report reflects some of the changes.

We embrace the new regulations, because, like WFHA's values, they put tenants first. We continue to prioritise our tenants' health and safety, as well as their wellbeing. In 2023-24, we again met all our health and safety targets, and we continued to provide support for our more vulnerable tenants, as well as advice and support to those who were struggling financially.

We were pleased to be able to spend almost £184,000 on improving our properties.

To improve access to our services, we introduced our first online portal in March 2023 – giving tenants the convenience of round-the-clock access to their tenancy and repairs accounts. But we also listened when the tenant survey showed that some wanted more face-to-face contact with



us. We responded by moving our staff out to offices at several of our schemes. This is increasing our direct engagement with tenants.

We would like to thank the Board and staff for their hard work in a year where regulatory considerations were so important. Their dedication and commitment to our tenants are at heart of all we do and the bedrock of our future success.

As always, we warmly invite tenants to contact us to share their views and experiences of our services.

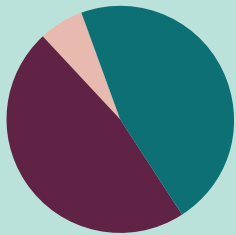
About WFHA

WFHA is an independent, not-for-profit, Registered Provider of housing. We currently work entirely in the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

We are a member of the g320 group of small housing associations in London. The group now has around 70 members – all with fewer than 2,500 homes. g320 members are locally focused, house a rich mixture of Londoners, and many of us offer specialist or support services. The g320 provides us with a forum for good practice, networking and partnership working.



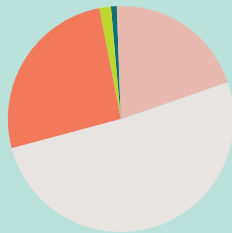
Type of home



- General needs (47%)
- Sheltered (46%)
- Supported (7%)

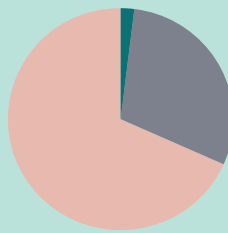
329 homes in total

Size of home



- Studio flats (20%)
- One bed flats (51%)
- Two bed flats/houses (26%)
- Three bed houses (2%)
- Four bed houses (1%)

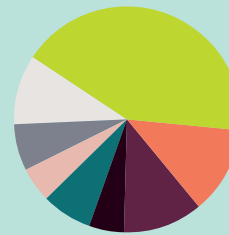
Age of tenants



- 18-24 years (1%)
- 25-54 years (32%)
- 55+ (67%)

325 tenants in total*
(four homes were empty at the time of reporting)

Ethnicity of tenants



- White British (42%)
- Black British/Caribbean (12%)
- Black/Black British African (11%)
- Black British other (5%)
- Asian/Asian British (7%)
- Mixed white/Other (6%)
- White Irish/White other (7%)
- Other/No information (10%)

Celebrating 60 years

WFHA reached an impressive milestone in 2023, as we celebrated our 60th anniversary.

Our organisation has come a long way since it was launched by a group of socially conscious Waltham Forest residents back in the 1960s. This group set up the Chingford Lions, before placing a number of Chingford properties in trust to rent to local people in need of affordable housing.

Today, we can be justly proud of WFHA's achievements. We now own 329 homes – all of them let at truly affordable rents. We continue to make a real difference to people's lives and plan to do so for a very long time.

So, in August 2023, we were pleased to hold a special event to celebrate our 60 years of

contributing good quality, low-cost homes to Waltham Forest. We invited tenants, Board members and partners to join us at the Vestry House Museum, where we shared our experiences and took the opportunity to get to know each other better.

Our guest of honour was Lara Oyedele, who was President of the Chartered Institute of Housing in 2022. Among other messages of support, we heard from Kate Henderson, who is the Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation.

She wrote: "Although small in size, I know that Waltham Forest has an outsized impact on the residents and community it serves."

Here's to our next 60 years!



*Above: Guest of honour, Lara Oyedele (right) talks to a tenant.
Below: Tenants and Board members listen to our speakers.
Left: Board Chair, Dale Walker, addresses our guests.*



We would like to thank Ongar Building Services, Intersys and Cleanscapes who kindly donated towards this event.

Housing management

Frontline services

Our 24/7 HomeMaster tenant portal, which went live in March 2023, has been providing tenants with a new way to manage their tenancy, at a time that suits them.

Tenants use the portal to:

- report non-emergency repairs
- check their rent account
- print out rent statements
- pay us a compliment or make a complaint, and
- update their household details.

The portal is part of HomeMaster, a new housing management program we are using, which is helping us to manage homes more efficiently.



Contact with staff

We continued to deal with tenant enquiries by phone and email, and offered office appointments booked in advance.

We held drop-in sessions at head office and at some of our schemes. We also invited tenants to join us on our estate and scheme inspections.

However, in our 2023 tenant survey, tenants told us that they would like to see more of us at their schemes and estates. So, we began work to move our head office to Libro Court and to get staff working initially from our offices at Electric House and Wingrove House. We will report back on how this is going in our next annual report.



Offering support

Our staff continued to offer support to residents by helping them to access grants, apply for benefits and manage their arrears. We also looked out for the wellbeing of our more vulnerable tenants.

Lettings and empty homes

We let 14 of our homes during the year, with 64% going to people from black and minority ethnic groups.

On average, it took us 5.5 weeks to let our empty homes. This was partly because three of the properties needed extensive upgrading before we could offer them to new tenants.

Evictions

We did not have to evict anyone during the year and there were no reported cases of anti-social behaviour.





Complaints and compliments

We have to meet new guidelines when we handle complaints (see page 11). This includes giving you more details in our annual report.

During 2023-24, we received seven complaints and two enquiries from councillors. These complaints were about:

- repairs not being completed quickly enough
- damage to property from a leak
- a contractor leaving a tenant for a long period with no heating and not turning up for appointments
- our staff not contacting a tenant after an incident
- dirty communal carpets
- gardeners working in the rain and how they spoke to a tenant, and
- problems with a garden and a plan to concrete it over.

Complaint outcomes

- Five complaints were resolved by the Head of Service at stage 1, within our target timescale of 10 working days
- Two were escalated to stage 2 and closed by

the Director of Housing within our target timescale of 20 working days

- One of the complaints reaching stage 2 was partly upheld, because we had failed to remember a tenant request.

The two councillor enquiries, whilst not formal complaints, were logged and responded to within the timescale of five working days.

We received three compliments – all saying tenants were pleased with how quickly repairs were done.

We continue to monitor and learn from tenant complaints, and Tyron Julien is our Board Member Responsible for Complaints.



WFHA's partners

- The London Borough of Waltham Forest through a compact agreement
- Outlook Care and Outward Housing, who provide support at our disability schemes

- TPAS, the tenant involvement experts
- Single Homeless Prevention Service
- YMCA and its Branches arm
- Spark 2 Life
- Housing Diversity Network
- National Housing Federation

- Chartered Institute of Housing
- Board Development Agency
- Acuity Research – our benchmarking and survey consultants

Tenant satisfaction measures



As a housing association with fewer than 1,000 properties, we now have to run a tenant perception survey every two years.

In June 2023, we commissioned Acuity Research to carry out the first of these. Our survey used the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures introduced

by the Regulator for Social Housing. The questions are set by the regulator, so that the results can be directly compared with other housing providers.

We also have to report on internal performance information.

Our results are set out in the table below. We sent tenants a booklet explaining the results and a newsletter setting out how we will use what tenants told us.

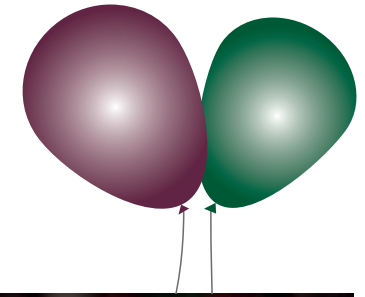
Both of these can be downloaded from the home page of our website at: wfha.org.uk

12 measures	Tenant perception survey questions		WFHA 2023-24	
1	TP01	Overall satisfaction	77%	😊
2	TP02	Satisfaction with repairs	79%	😊
3	TP03	Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	75%	😊
4	TP04	Satisfaction that the home is well-maintained	76%	😊
5	TP05	Satisfaction that the home is safe	78%	😊
6	TP06	Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	64%	😊
7	TP07	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	76%	😊
8	TP08	Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	79%	😊
9	TP09	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	44%	😊
10	TP10	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well-maintained	80%	😊
11	TP11	Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	70%	😊
12	TP12	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	62%	😊

10 measures	Internal performance data		WFHA 2023-24	
13	CH01	Complaints relative to the size of the landlord*	2%	😊
14	CH02	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	100%	😊
15	NM01	Anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases relative to the size of the landlord*	0	😊
16	RP01	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0%	😊
17	RP02	Repairs completed within target timescale	99.8%	😊
18	BS01	Gas safety checks	100%	😊
19	BS02	Fire safety checks	100%	😊
20	BS03	Asbestos safety checks	100%	😊
21	BS04	Water safety checks	100%	😊
22	BS05	Lift safety checks	100%	😊

* To compare our results with those of other landlords, we are required to scale up our numbers as if we had 1,000 properties.

Keeping homes in good condition



Repair satisfaction

The tenant satisfaction survey we carried out in the summer of 2023, using the new questions provided by our Regulator (see page 8), confirmed that 79% of our tenants were satisfied with their repairs.

We were happy with these results, but we are continuing to monitor and work closely with our contractors keep satisfaction levels rising.

Health and safety

We have to meet set regulatory standards in six areas of health and safety:

- Gas safety
- Electrical safety
- Fire safety
- Asbestos safety
- Water safety (Legionella testing)
- Passenger lift safety

We were 100% compliant in all these areas. We did not have to carry out major works following fire risk assessments or other health and safety risks during the year, because we had finished all the work needed in the previous year.

We will report on work we are carrying out in 2024-25 in our next annual report.

Investing in homes

A large part of the year's budget for upgrading our properties was set aside for a new roof at Garenne Court and work to improve communal lighting at several of our schemes. This meant that we did less work in tenants' flats than in the previous year, even though our overall costs increased.

Overall, we spent:

- £42,378 on installing new kitchens in seven homes
- £31,990 on new bathrooms in seven homes
- £20,402 on storage heaters for 11 homes
- £23,923 on electric water heaters for four homes
- £38,800 on new roofs
- £26,207 on communal electric lighting upgrades

How well we performed

We carried out 593 repairs during 2023-24.

We met our target times for:

- 100% of emergency call outs (there were 12 of them)
- 100% of urgent repairs
- 99% of routine repairs

Our budget has been affected by inflation and, as a result, we are paying more for our repairs service.



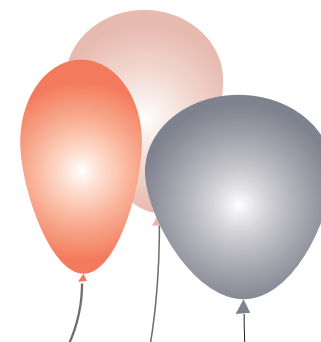
Above: Sally Rowe led the asset services team during 2023-24.

Below: Director of Housing and Deputy CEO, Michael Pughsley, talks to a tenant.



The staff team

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Gold



Investors in People Gold

WFHA was awarded Investors in People Gold in 2023, for our best practice approach to managing and developing our staff.

Investors in People (IIP) is an international body that gives accreditation to businesses that value their people.

The IIP report said: "People have an excellent

understanding of the objectives and priorities of WFHA and they are strongly committed to their achievement. Managers are approachable, supportive and encouraging and they have created strong feelings of trust across the organisation where people are motivated to go over and above to meet tenant needs. The REACH values are firmly embedded. People understand what they mean at a practical level and they are highly motivated to reflect them in everything they do.

They are spoken about all the time and are an integral part of objective setting and review."

Goodbye to Nicky

During the year, we thanked Nicky Anderson, our Head of Operations, as she left the organisation.



Group picture, left to right: Hollie Nicette, Operations Co-ordinator; Nicky Anderson, Head of Operations; Sally Rowe, Head of Asset Services; Shahron Shah, CEO; Lavinia Marius, Independent Living Co-ordinator; Michael Pughsley, Director of Housing and Deputy CEO; Linda Wright, Head of Governance; Angela Hendrick, Operations Manager.

Pictured below: Kevin Marius, Asset Services Manager (left) and Samir Dahhane, Independent Living Co-ordinator (right).



Meeting changing regulations

WFHA, along with the rest of the social housing sector, worked hard during 2023-24, to prepare for far-reaching regulatory changes – most of which came into affect on 1 April 2024.

The changes have been introduced following a period where a number of social housing landlords were found to be badly letting down their tenants.

As a small, tenant-centred housing association, we actively welcome the new approach. We recognise that the new standards we are being asked to meet are line with our aims and values, because they are designed to increase the safety, wellbeing and happiness of tenants.



New consumer regulations

Central to the changes are a set of new consumer regulations, which were introduced by the Social Housing Regulator following the introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

We spent the year checking, updating and improving our policies and ways of working to make sure we were ready to meet the new requirements.

This included:

- making sure we are meeting tougher health and safety rules
- ensuring we know the condition of the homes we own and manage
- handling complaints effectively, in line with the latest version of the Housing Ombudsman's complaints handling code (for more information go to our website at: wfha.org.uk/tenants/complaints and see page 7 for this year's report)
- carrying out the first of what will be regular tenant perception surveys, using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (see page 8 for details about these surveys and this year's results).

For WFHA, this is just the start. We will carry on checking our organisation to make sure that we continue to offer good quality homes and services to our tenants in the most positive and respectful way we can.



Pictured on this page: our Chair (bottom left), CEO (above, centre of picture) and staff members Angela Hendrik (bottom left, centre of picture) and Hollie Nicette (below left), meeting tenants at our 60th Anniversary event.



Governance: the Board



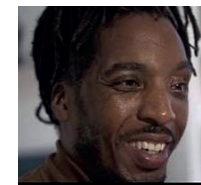
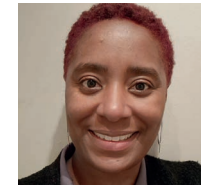
The Board continued to meet online, but met face to face for its November meeting and for an autumn awayday.

In addition to overseeing our work, performance, health and safety compliance, handling of risk and financial budgets, the Board also:

- commissioned consultants to review our governance arrangements, to make us a stronger and more effective organisation as we head into the future
- oversaw the final year of our existing business plan – and approved our new business plan for 2024-27

- reviewed and approved our equality and diversity policy
- approved our commitment to the SHARP pledge (which aims to work towards a social housing sector with zero tolerance of racism) and to HouseProud (accreditation for housing associations that promote equality and provide support for their LGBTQ+ tenants)
- reviewed the results of our tenant survey
- approved our decision to move from our offices in Church Hill to our satellite offices around the borough.

Our business plan and policies are available to download at: wfha.org.uk/publications



Top left to right: Ayo Akinwale, Board member and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead; Ben Hutton, Chair of Finance, Audit & Risk Committee, and Treasurer; Chanelle Rowe, Board member.

Centre left to right: Dale Walker, Chair; Gareth Jones, Board member; Josie Parsons, Board member.

Bottom left to right: Maggie McCann, Chair of Asset Management & Development Committee; Marina Robertson, Vice Chair & Chair of Human Resources, Remuneration & Governance Committee; Tyron Julien, Board member and Member Responsible for Complaints.



Delivering value for money



Following a challenging past few years, we were pleased to achieve an improvement in our results, despite our costs being affected by high levels of inflation.

This improvement was partly due to savings in management costs made in the previous year, but it was also down to the dedication of staff who work to keep spending in check.

Our cost per unit is still high, partly because of our London location, but also because we continue to invest in improvements for our housing stock.

We also know that providers of a significant amount of housing for older people typically have operating margins that are around 10% lower than other housing providers.

We remain in a good position to develop homes in future. We have low levels of finance debt and a facility of £5m from Handelsbanken, from which we have drawn down £1m to date.

Value for money metrics 2023-24

	Achieved 2022-23	Achieved 2023-24	Target 2023-24	Benchmark 2022-23	Target 2024-25
Reinvestment (spend on homes as a % of total stock value)	5.56%	1%	6%	3.65%	3%
New supply delivered (how many new homes)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Gearing (our debt levels – loans allow us to invest in existing homes or develop new ones)	4.10%	4.54%	5%	14.54%	5.2%
EBITDA MRI interest cover (measures our surpluses against the amount of interest we pay)	568%	617%	300%	152%	401%
Headline social housing costs per unit (average spend on each home – includes managing, servicing, repairing & upgrading costs)	£6,386	£6,268	£6,600	£6,787	£6,573
Operating margin: social housing (surplus before loan interest paid)	3.43%	11.66%	11.4%	11.4%	11.1%
Operating margin: all homes (surplus before loan interest paid)	3.81%	12.75%	10.3%	10.3%	10.9%
Return on capital employed (surplus as a % of capital used)	2.39%	2.1%	1.4%	1.8%	2%

Our financial year



At year end, 31 March 2024, WFHA maintained a positive balance sheet with cash of £890,996 (2023: £531,160) and net current assets of £1,739,649 (2023: £1,356,246).

Overall, WFHA can be proud of being in a good position, in our 60th year of operation, despite rising prices, particularly for repairs and maintenance, and a more challenging regulatory environment.

Rents

We collected 100.2% of the rent due from our tenants in both general needs and sheltered housing. This compares to 95.5% in 2022-23. Our target this year was to collect 100%. We collected 97% of rent due from our supported housing tenants. The median for our benchmarking group of similar landlords was 98.03% for general needs and sheltered housing, and 97% for supported housing.

Our rent arrears stood at 3.5% overall. This includes 1.69% for general needs (3% in 2022-23) against a target of 2.63%, and 1% for sheltered housing against a target of 1%. The arrears were 0.23% against a target of 3.95% for supported housing. The median for our benchmarking group was 3.62% for general needs, 1.6% for sheltered and 2.41% for supported housing.

Balance sheet for the year ending 31 March 2024

	2024	2023
Fixed assets		
Intangible fixed assets	68,720	77,894
Tangible fixed assets: housing properties	14,110,321	13,886,979
Other fixed assets	121,906	139,333
	14,300,947	14,104,206
Current assets		
Debtors	848,653	825,086
Cash and cash equivalents	890,996	531,160
	1,739,649	1,356,246
Creditors		
Amounts falling due within one year	(502,043)	(494,960)
Net current assets	1,237,606	861,286
Total assets less current liabilities	15,538,553	14,965,492
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	7,517,623	7,180,402
Provision for liabilities	165,000	153,000
	7,682,623	7,333,402
Capital and reserves		
Called-up share capital	19	19
Not revenue reserves	7,855,911	7,632,071
	15,538,553	14,965,492

Cash flow statement for the year ending 31 March 2024

	2024	2023
Net cash generated from operating activities	756,331	21,218
Cash flow from investing activities		
Interest received	2,699	1,414
Proceeds from sale of fixed assets	-	584,501
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(733,451)	(846,042)
Net cash generated from investing activities	(730,752)	(260,127)
Cash flow from financing activities		
Interest paid	(95,454)	(68,718)
New bank loan	500,000	-
Repayment of borrowings	(70,289)	(63,736)
Net cash used in financing activities	334,257	(132,454)
Net (decrease)/ increase in cash & cash equivalents	359,836	(371,363)
Cash & cash equivalents at start of year	531,160	902,523
Cash & cash equivalents at year end	890,996	531,160

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ending 31 March 2024

	2024	2023
Turnover	2,801,933	2,628,118
Operating costs	(2,475,303)	(2,535,333)
Gain on disposal of housing properties	-	265,155
Operating surplus	326,630	357,940
Interest receivable	2,699	1,414
Interest payable	(56,489)	(52,734)
Surplus for the year	272,840	306,620
Other comprehensive income		
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension plan for the year	(49,000)	(48,000)
Total comprehensive income for year	223,840	258,620

Waltham Forest Housing Association

Energy Centre, 31 Church Hill,
Walthamstow E17 3RU
Phone: 020 8524 6987
Email: info@wfha.org.uk
Web: www.wfha.org.uk

Executive Team

Shahron Shah, Chief Executive
Michael Pughsley, Director of
Housing and Deputy CEO

Professional advisors

Bankers: Lloyds Bank
External auditors: Knox Cropper LLP
Internal Auditors: TIAA Ltd
Solicitors: Blake Morgan

Professional services

Accountants: Alwyns LLP



**we
RESPECT**

People and communities through our belief in equality, inclusion and the value of diversity. We believe that structural inequalities in our society create systemic disadvantages. We are an anti-racist organisation with zero tolerance to discrimination.

**we
EMPOWER**

People and communities by maximising strengths and opportunities and building resilience.

**we are
AMBITIOUS**

Constantly improving, delivering better value for money and striving to provide more homes and services.

**we
CARE**

About what we do, step up to take responsibility and are passionate about our social purpose and making a positive difference.

**we are
HONEST**

Act with integrity and are accountable to our tenants, our partners and each other.

Together we can

