



BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is set out the Association's objectives and financial plans for the period 2022/23. The plan sets out the methodology by which we will do this, at the same time, the Association will continue to provide high quality housing and put residents at the heart of all of its services.

As the world continues to manage the Covid-19 pandemic we cannot underestimate the impact this has had on each and every one of us. The past 12 months has posed the biggest challenge in the Association's history. The volume of government rule and guidance changes necessitated continuous decision-making and adaptations to policies, procedures and practice in order to protect the health and well-being for both our staff and our residents.

Our staff have risen to this unprecedented challenge and gone above and beyond the call of duty to keep those they care for safe.

The costs and losses incurred due to the pandemic have outweighed any savings or funding received, and many costs are still ongoing. This has led to tough business conditions and difficult decisions being made. Our care home and independently living apartments has suffered significant void loss, new admissions are now accepted but extra measures are being taken to keep residents, visitors and staff safe. We have adopted a safe admissions policy, have stringent cleaning protocols, have a good supply of PPE and conduct regular testing in the care home. We also know that vaccination offers the best protection against the virus both for staff and care home residents. We fully support the introduction of the mandatory requirement for all care home workers, and anyone entering a care home, to be fully vaccinated, unless they are exempt under the regulations.

This is the right thing to do and a vitally important step to continue protecting care homes now and in the future.

As a result of the pandemic, Rockdale has been unable to deliver some of the activities published in the 2021 Business Plan and we have only started to see 2020 activities being initiated towards the later part of 2021. A review of the larger planned maintenance projects has been undertaken, these will be reprogrammed and prioritised in line with our 25-year plan following the completion of a full Stock Condition Survey carried out in 2021.

Introduction continued

The Government's Social Housing White paper issued in November 20 also sets out to 'raise the standard of social housing and meet the aspirations of residents throughout the country today and in the future'. We will therefore conduct a lean review and map activity to ensure resources are focused where they have most value/impact. Be customer-driven, by giving choice in when and how existing and new residents can access our services.

Other factors that will continue to have an impact on our current and future operational environment, the consequences of Brexit, which is not yet fully understood and the governments drive to address climate change and achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2050, Rockdale clearly has a part to play in this,

A longer-term strategy will be developed that demonstrates the challenges we face, and have an operating model that ensures Rockdale achieves long-term financial stability in order for us to continue to deliver good quality and safe, affordable rented and leasehold homes with enhanced landlord services and an excellent rated care home that is not only competitive but one of choice.

Chris Munday
CEO





Rockdale's mission is to provide affordable housing, care and other help to improve the quality of life for older people

We will provide good quality homes and support services for older people which meet their changing needs. This means we will:

- * Provide well managed housing cost-effectively and to high standards
- * Consult with residents, tenants and leaseholders on the services provided
- * Regularly monitor, evaluate and strive to improve services
- * Provide efficient and responsive repair services, and make adequate provision for planned maintenance
- * Make the best use of our assets to maintain a sustainable community
- * Offer appropriate advice to services and welfare benefits

Offer high quality residential care

- * Aim to establish Rockdale House as a model of excellence in residential care
- * Recognise that the quality of residential care is dependent on the quality of the staff providing it, and thus place a high priority on the recruitment, training and retention of staff

Sustain and develop our charitable work

- * Set aside such capacity and funding as can be afforded by the Association for the support of those who do not have the financial means to access our services
- * Account clearly for our charitable work through external reporting
- * Seek grants and donations for the support and expansion of our charitable work

History of Rockdale

Rockdale House, built in 1875 (now named Laurie House, after John Dawson Laurie). Built as the home of the Laurie family in 1875, the three-story ragstone building belonged to Alfred J. St George McAdam Laurie, who in the 1890s had the first telephone in the town. He had a son, John Dawson Laurie, who became a businessman, stockbroker, and Lord Mayor of London.

Laurie lived at Rockdale House, the three-story ragstone building on Rockdale Housing Association's site, which is still present with most external original features. In 1896 Laurie began work in the family firm in the City of London, and he also joined the local Volunteers. During the First World War, he was Provost Marshal of the 2nd Army on the Western Front, achieving the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the West Kent Regiment. After the war, Laurie returned to work in the City. He became a City Alderman and was knighted in 1936, being elected Lord Mayor in November 1941. Laurie was made a Baronet in 1942. He was a leading freemason; he never married. Sir John was elected a member of Sevenoaks Urban District Council and served one year as Chairman.

Following John Dawson Laurie's death, Rockdale House and the gardens were sold to the Sevenoaks and District Old People's Housing Association, which had been founded by Beatrice Wilson and was then converted to accommodation for the elderly. Beatrice Wilson was a gifted physiotherapist with a vision to improve the quality of older people's lives. She trained at Guy's Hospital but showed her commitment to Sevenoaks by opening the town's first physiotherapy centre, the Vitasan Clinic in South Park (1937 – 1964). In 1948 she realised her ambition of improving the care of older people in the town by setting up the Sevenoaks and District Old People's Housing Association (later to become Rockdale Housing Association) and opened Rockdale House, a residential care home in 1953. She was also a founding member of the Soroptomists in Sevenoaks.

The Soroptomists, a professional ladies luncheon club, was formed in Sevenoaks in 1937, the founding members included Beatrice Wilson, the headmistress of Walthamstow Hall School, Dr Abelson, a local GP and the pianist Ethel Breething. Members were active in supporting Beatrice Wilson to set up Rockdale as a home for the elderly. In 1963 Beatrice Wilson married Dr Lawrence Lockhart and moved to Cambridge. The physiotherapy services at the Vitasan Clinic were taken over by the National Health Service.

Beatrice Wilson remained President of the Housing Association for many years and continued her interest until her death. Since then, apartments for people over the age of 60 have been built on the site for rent and leasehold. Laurie House was the first building to be converted into homes for the elderly by Beatrice Wilson. Today it has been developed into 8 two-bedroom and 3 one-bedroom beautiful apartments. The building has also been added to, with a brand-new block of 1 two-bedroom and 7 one-bedroom apartments, many of which enjoy views from a Juliet balcony. Stairs and lifts make all floors accessible. The exterior of the ragstone building remains the same.

History of Rockdale continued

Rockdale Housing Association is a registered social landlord. Today it is home to over 200 residents in a range of sheltered accommodation, leasehold and rented and residential care.

Rockdale is a not-for-profit charitable organisation that enables us to keep Rockdale affordable for all and any profits are invested back into the Association and not to shareholders. We are governed by a Board of Trustees which ensures that Rockdale adheres to its values and principles of providing the best, affordable housing to older people in Sevenoaks.



Beatrice Wilson, Rockdale's founder and Laurie House (formerly Rockdale House)

Regulation and Governance

Each year the Association faces an on-going challenge to continue to provide and maintain the right services for our vulnerable older people at an affordable cost.

As we begin 2022 it is clear that the additional challenges we face as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to have far-reaching implications, both for our internal resources and for those of our residents. We therefore need to review our strategic direction and purpose; this will require effective strategic level control and risk management.

The regulatory for Social Housing is primarily concerned with ensuring social housing assets are protected but also outlines the importance of providers ensuring continued viability, successful delivery of strategic objectives, delivering services to tenants, and maintaining compliance with regulatory standards. Boards remain ultimately accountable to current and future tenants, funders, local and central government, and the regulator.

Compliance

The Association is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing and is monitored under its Regulatory Arrangements for Small Associations Programme (RASA). The Regulator also sets the consumer standard, the four standards are Homes, Tenancy, Neighbourhood and Community and Tenant involvement and Empowerment. We also conduct periodic reviews to ensure compliance with the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance,

Rockdale House is monitored and inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), who carry out unannounced inspections at their discretion. At least once every three years Rockdale is required to provide Compliance Assessment evidence, the last assessment took place in September 2018 and therefore evidence gathering is currently taking place to submit our assessment in 2022.

The Association has a Business Continuity Plan which is regularly reviewed by senior management staff. This addresses risks, people, property, the Associations stability and business continuity,

The Association also maintains robust financial controls which are regularly reviewed and updated, in addition, an annual financial audit is carried out by an independent firm of auditors to provide further assurance to our Board of the Association's financial viability.

The government's Social Housing White Paper issued in November 20 highlights the importance of accountability to tenants, we are therefore mindful of evolving requirements in this area. We have produced clear standards for handling complaints adhering to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and the CQC guidance, which we self-assess periodically during the year. There is also a commitment to ensure homes are safe to live in. Building and Fire Safety is a paramount concern for residents and there is a requirement to comply with the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer regulation objectives which explicitly include safety and the need to identify a nominated person responsible for complying with our health and safety requirements.

Rockdale House

Our key objective is to provide a holistic person-centred care approach, by helping residents with every aspect of their daily living. This includes practical tasks, such as washing and dressing, as well as support to pursue leisure activities of their choosing.

It is our philosophy that great care supports people practically, socially, and emotionally and this is reflected in our approach regardless of the level of support needed.

Recruitment of volunteers was continuous before the pandemic, to offer extra activities and interest for our residents, which we successfully managed for the House. For example, our volunteers included students who read to our residents or performed music, Mums and toddlers, owners with their very well-behaved small dogs. We aim to get back to inviting our volunteers back to the House as soon as it is possible to do so.

2021 has proven to be a difficult year for Rockdale House. Until 11th January there were no Covid infections in the home but following the first vaccine, residents started to display symptoms. Staff were also infected and caring for the residents during a twenty-eight-day period of isolation proved to be challenging. A number of residents sadly died as a result of the pandemic and some of the reasons that care homes were so badly hit are intrinsic to the residents, the virus and the environment. Measures were put in place to help manage these and we are better prepared against coronavirus now, but the underlying risks remain.

Life is slowly returning to some normality and recently the named essential visitor can visit a relative in their room. Currently, there remains in place strict guidelines for visitors being admitted to the home with PPE being worn and PCR and Lateral Flow Test carried out, as per government advice. There can be as many as 140 tests carried out per week and there is a requirement for tests to be recorded, this has placed extra pressure on our resources.

The staff have coped magnificently with all the pressures incurred by the pandemic. Unfortunately, we have seen a number of our staff suffering from long term Covid and they have not been able to fully return to work.

Public Health England permitted us to start admitting residents again in March 21 and since then we have admitted 31 residents, 18 of whom have come in for respite care. We have endeavoured to help families with providing a break for their loved ones.

Following the pandemic, we have recognised the importance of creating a suitable outside space for our residents. Our garden project has now started to develop, its main objective is to improve access to the rear garden and create an environment where residents and their visitors can enjoy. It is hoped to gain much public support and the Head Gardener at Penshurst Place agreed to support the project and scope the design. The involvement from residents, volunteers and the local community will bring this project to fruition in 2022. This is a key fundraising project and will be developed collaboratively across internal teams.

Rockdale House continued

Rockdale House has a review score of 9.8 out of 10 based on reviews in the last two years via carehome.co.uk, a widely used website for new admissions when searching for a care home.

Rockdale House – Our promise

- 🏠 To continue to work towards offering a limited number of residents' access to Rockdale House care through our charitable status, specifically for those who may not otherwise be able to meet the costs.
- 🏠 Created a Two-tier fee structure, linked to dependency and which provides care that meets the specific needs of each resident.
- 🏠 To stabilise staff turnover and reduce the use of agency staff. Focusing on staff training and recognising staff development opportunities so that individuals can meet their full potential and the environment becomes stabilised.
- 🏠 Refine and embed the induction process for new staff which provides coaching and mentoring provision, ensuring staff have the skills and knowledge to equip them for the role, where they feel valued.
- 🏠 Implement robust internal audits and reviews to continually improve service delivery.
- 🏠 Set Key Performance Indicators which are reported to the CEO and Board monthly.
- 🏠 Further develop and strengthen links in the community, stakeholders and working collaboratively with the internal teams.
- 🏠 To maintain occupancy at budgeted levels, developing partnerships, working with key agencies such as local commissioners to minimise void levels.
- 🏠 To prepare for our next CQC inspection.

Challenges and Priorities

- 🏠 To try and achieve an occupancy of 45 out of 49 rooms with permanent residents, leaving 2 rooms for respite stays.
- 🏠 For managers within the home to be fully aware of their individual budgets and responsible for their area of accountability.
- 🏠 To ensure all residents who are privately funded have the new contract in place, assessing each at 6 monthly intervals and adjusting their fees in line with changing care needs.
- 🏠 To restrict the number of KCC funded residents to 6, unless agreed by the Board.
- 🏠 To ensure that all staff are compliant with training requirements and have regular supervisions with a yearly appraisal.
- 🏠 To complete the garden project, enabling all residents, whatever their disability, to enjoy the new facility.
- 🏠 To achieve better communication with the Lodge, ensuring that each section of Rockdale Housing Association supports and works together in a positive and productive way.
- 🏠 To promote Rockdale House constantly ensuring that opportunities are found to market the home in the wider community.
- 🏠 To obtain positive inspection reports making sure Rockdale House is compliant with every requirement.
- 🏠 To solve the issues surrounding the ineffective use of Cura, with a new bespoke care plan for Rockdale House.
- 🏠 To follow every lead with recruiting new staff quickly and processing their application as soon as possible.
- 🏠 To update the fabric of the building and re-decorate in order to maintain a high standard.



Rockdale House resident enjoying activities

Housing management

Residents' Profile

We have 178 residents in our sheltered apartments, whilst most residents are single occupants, we have 14 couples in our properties, the majority of these within our leasehold apartments.

Support Service

We have a team of Support Coordinators who offer a range of services to support residents at Rockdale, this includes 24-hour emergency cover. These services can be offered as routine, providing help and information on local services and support, ensuring adequate care and domestic services are arranged. We also offering additional support to residents with temporary or enhanced needs where there is limited help from family, these can include those with visual or speech impairment and varying degrees of memory problems.

The Support Coordinator's receive regular training and this includes first aid, as well as other topics such as welfare benefits, adult safeguarding and infection control measures.

Housing Management

The housing management service is mainly operational, providing services directly to tenants and leaseholders.

Our Housing Officer provides a customer focused response to tenancy and property related issues. Also conducting Estate Inspections working in collaboration with our Maintenance Teams.

We gather and act upon residents' views by holding regular meetings as it helps shape and improve Rockdale's services through feedback and partnership working. We create opportunities for residents to take a proactive role in voicing residents' concerns and make suggestions on how to improve the environment in which they live. We will continue to do this by listening to what our residents want by consulting them on the services we provide and giving them every opportunity to scrutinise, provide feedback and make recommendations. We also need to manage evolving customer expectations, including how and when people want to access services. This has been particularly challenging to achieve over the past year but have aimed to gather views via our Support and Housing Management service.

Access to Housing

During 2021 we welcomed 20 new residents in both our rent and leasehold apartments. Many residents see the benefits of our 24-hour support service whilst still being able to maintain a degree of independence. Other benefits include a range of organised activities which creates a sociable environment which in turn can improve both physical and mental well-being. We also have a range of in-house services such as a lunch provision, home help and property maintenance.






Housing management continued

During the later part of 2020 following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions we have worked with organisations to deliver social and community projects to help reduce isolation and loneliness. Improving the well-being of our older residents and providing advice on how they can get the right support to continue living independently in their home will continue to be our key priority.

We currently have 118 applicants registered on our Choice Based Lettings system whom are assessed and prioritised for rehousing in line with our Banding criteria. We also have active volunteers that make up our Care and Assessment panel whom undertake home visits in order to assess the criteria of applicants.

We have introduced a number of new procedures to ensure that our lettings functions continue to be Covid safe for new applicants and staff. An on-line bidding process for applicants has been set up which enables applicants to see current vacancies and express an interest via a digital format. We aim to improve our systems and processes further to deliver service choices to fit with customers' lives. Following the success of an open day in August 21, which was aimed at reaching out to those in need of rehousing and support, we aim to run similar events during early Spring and late Summer of 2022.

Challenges and Priorities

-  To identify efficiencies by removing activity that has no value to the customer experience. We aim to do this by conducting a lean review and map activity to ensure resources are focused where they have most value/impact. To deliver good quality, affordable rented and leasehold homes with enhanced landlord services.
-  To create a Tenants' Charter in line with the NHF 'Together with Tenants' adopter programme to strengthen the relationship between residents and housing association landlords. The programme outlines a four-point plan for change. The Charter will set out in clear terms what our residents can and should expect from the Association.
-  Deliver our Resident Involvement Strategy that provides opportunities for residents to engage and play a constructive role in improving housing services and the environment in which they live. Listen to our customers to develop services to meet their needs, providing a great customer experience.
-  To modernize our service accessibility. To build on our digital engagement opportunities to ensure our service is efficient and easy to access. We will measure this by percentage of digital interactions and begin to create flexibility for customers through our lettings practice. Be customer-driven, by giving choice in when and how existing and new residents access our services.
-  To review the reliability of our current Tunstall Call system in preparation of the BT Digital Switch set for 2025. The system currently provides residents with security and promotes independence; it needs to be fit for purpose and sustainable to ensure we can continue to offer the level of support our residents required.



Supported Independent Living

Maintenance

Property Profile

Rockdale Housing have 230 units in management, these include 50 rooms within our Care Home, 124 studio and 1/2 bedroom apartments available for rent and 56 apartments available for private ownership on a leasehold basis. Properties range in age with the first being built on the Sevenoaks site in 1958, with the most recent additions in 2015 and the original Laurie House and the Lodge office facilities are Victorian. Communal facilities are available on site for use by all residents and include laundry rooms, common rooms, sitting room and small library, bath and shower rooms with disabled access, scooter charging facilities and gardens.

In October 2021 we had an opportunity to purchase one of existing 2 bedroom leasehold apartment. We have subsequently added this unit to our rented apartment property portfolio.

Maintenance Service

We have on-site maintenance and housekeeping teams that are responsible for delivering routine, planned and responsive maintenance services. They are also responsible for monitoring of health & safety requirements, refuse management and cleaning communal spaces.

We respond to emergency requests within 24 hours and urgent requests within 5 days. Routine requests for maintenance services must be carried out in 28 days and we monitor our performance regularly. Residents' satisfaction with our services is assessed by residents' survey and this is monitored on a monthly basis.

Gardening Services

Our on-site gardening team are responsible for gardening and ground maintenance both planned and responsive. We actively encourage residents to participate in the maintenance and development of our gardens as volunteers, and through membership of our gardening club, both supported by our Head Gardener.

Much of the planting around the site has been grown from seed in the on-site greenhouses, and where planting schemes are changed the planting will be transferred to another area for future display. The gardening team are also responsible for ensuring the walkways are clear and safe, especially when we encounter disruptive snow, ice or fallen trees.






Property Refurbishments

Each apartment is inspected individually at the point it is vacant and assessed against both the Decent Homes and our lettings standard. Void performance is monitored across both Housing and Maintenance departments on a weekly basis. We have seen our average void time increase significantly from 60 days in 2020 to 76 days. There has also been a sharp increase in the number of apartments becoming void over a

Maintenance – continued

short period of time, we have also seen issues with Contractor performance and delays in work being undertaken predominately as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Challenges and Priorities

-  To finalise the integration of responsive and routine maintenance to a cloud-based management system.
-  To develop our 25-year plan following the completion of a full stock condition survey carried out in 2021. The survey will inform a minor works/maintenance programme that will need to be undertaken in the future and then a more extensive capital replacement programme of major elements such as roofs and replacement heating systems.
-  To identify and potentially defer a number of capital/planned programme works in order to prioritise the future delivery of projects which have been significantly delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
-  The introduction of the Fire Safety Act 2021 followed the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Government has set out clarification for landlords whom must manage the risk of fire for structure and external walls e.g., Cladding, balconies and windows and entrance doors to individual flats that open into communal areas. Whilst we have initiated a fire door replacement programme in 2021 there are likely to be further mandatory requirements for landlords.
-  The Governments White Paper puts residents back at the heart of building safety and goes further to delivering changes to ensure that every resident is safe in their home. We are required to identify a nominated person responsible for complying with health and safety requirements and ongoing compliance with the Decent Homes Standard.



Planned Maintenance

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the planned projects initially scheduled for 2021 and 2022/23, with very little progress being made at the early of part of 2021. Following the easing of restrictions in April 21, key projects were initiated, these include replacement fire doors, refurbishment of guest flat and 2nd lift installation in Beatrice Wilson.

We have therefore undertaken a review of the projects and have aimed to prioritise projects for 2022 and 2023. There will also be a need to set contingencies to allow for a full review of the stock condition survey completed in the later part of 2021. The survey will inform a more extensive capital replacement programme of major elements such as roofs and replacement heating systems over the next 25 years.

Planned Maintenance and Capital Expenditure 2022	
Project	£
Planned Maintenance	
Beatrice Wilson calorifiers & radiators	65,000
Beatrice Wilson bunding of water tanks and electrics	20,000
Sevenoaks Apartments electrical Inspections	12,000
Rockdale House Internal redecoration and curtain replacement	17,000
Tunstall Replacement/upgrade (scoping only)	5,000
Estate Improvements (security, lighting and fencing)	10,000
Sevenoaks Apartments Fire System upgrade (following stock condition survey)	7,000
	136,000
Capital Expenditure	
Sevenoaks Flats decent homes upgrade (kitchen/bathroom)	90,000
Guest Room Refurbishment (108)	6,000
	96,000
Leasehold Flats Sinking and Redecoration Funds	
Tunstall replacement/upgrade (scoping only)	2,000
Webb's Meadow Courtyard (scoping only)	2,000
Internal decorations	15,000
	19,000
TOTALS	251,000

Planned Maintenance continued

Planned Maintenance and Capital Expenditure 2023	
Project	£
Planned Maintenance	
Beatrice Wilson Internal redecoration	20,000
Lodge external redecoration	5,000
Sevenoaks Apartments electrical Inspections	10,000
Akehurst Lane Stair lift upgrade	5,000
Tunstall Replacement/upgrade	68,333
Estate Improvements	10,000
	118,333
Capital Expenditure	
Lodge window replacement	15,000
Sevenoaks Apartment decent homes upgrades	90,000
Beatrice Wilson laundry refurbishment	18,000
	123,000
Leasehold Flats Sinking and Redecoration Funds	
Tunstall replacement/upgrade	31,667
Webb's Meadow Courtyard	80,000
Internal decorations	15,000
	126,667
TOTALS	368,000



Recruitment/HR

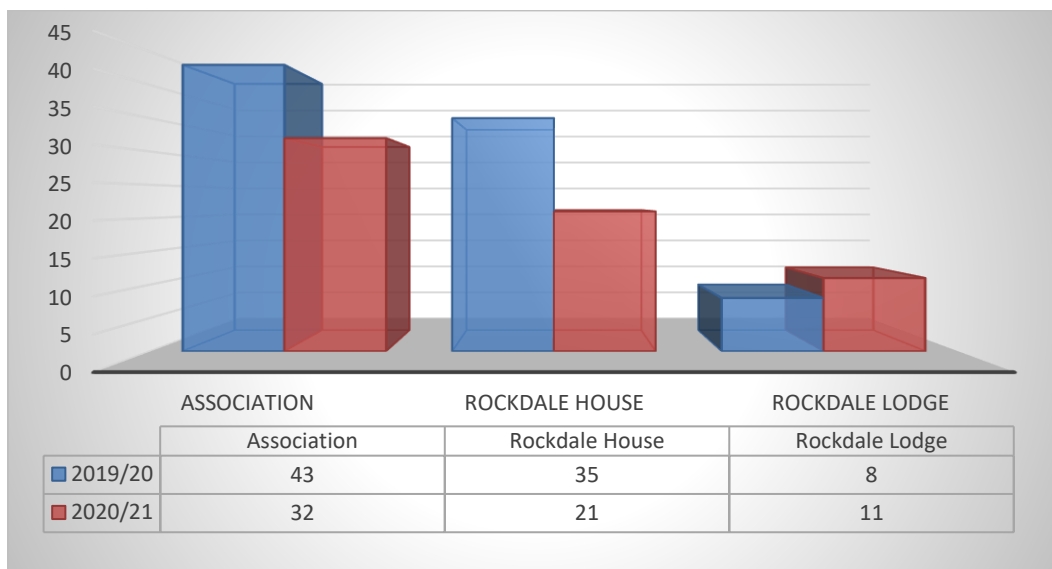
The Association currently has approximately 98 employees (including bank staff), 63% of the staff work full-time and 37% work part-time (less than 30 hours per week).

Our vacancy rate at the end of August 2021 was 9.18%. We had 8 vacant roles yet to fill as listed below:

- Head of Maintenance
- Head of Finance
- Gardener/Maintenance Assistant (new post)
- Finance and Maintenance Admin Assistant (new post)
- Support Coordinator
- Care Supervisor (formally Head of Care)
- Senior RSW
- Housekeeping Assistant

According to Skills for Care the estimated turnover rate of directly employed staff working in the adult social care sector was 30.4%, equivalent to approximately 430,000 leavers over the year. Rockdale's staff turnover rate for this period was 35.98% which remains higher than the sector average.

This chart below shows the number of staff members leaving the Association's employment between August 2020 and August 2021:



32 members of staff left the organisation from August 20-21. These figures include 8 employees who were on bank contracts and 2 who were on a temporary contract along with 3 members of the Senior Management Team.

Training and Development


Line managers continue to complete regular reviews and annual appraisals along with the 6-month probationary reviews for all staff using the appraisal process. Combined with the completion of their personal development plan (PDP) staff are given the opportunity to complete additional or specialised training relevant to their role to enhance their professional development.

3 members of the care team are due to complete their qualification in Health and Social Care this year and 1 member of staff has just enrolled on the Level 3 qualification. To date we have a total of 20 care staff who have a level 2 or above qualification in Health and Social care. 5 members of the lodge team have also completed their First Aid at Work certificate.

The Social Care TV package is continually reviewed and updated with courses which have are due for review and training matrix's are issued to line managers to notify their staff which training modules need to be completed. A COVID 19 mandatory module has also been added for all staff to completed following the COVID pandemic.

Sickness/ Absence

Sickness and absence for the current year to date has been closely monitored. The chart below shows the figures for the year ending 31/08/2021 compared to last year:

	19/20	20/21	Difference compared to previous year
Total sickness days lost	948	1330	383
Short term days lost	224	136	88
Long term days lost	724	1194	470
Sick days related to COVID/self-isolation	622	746	

We continued to see a high number of long-term sick days especially in December and at the start of the year due to the COVID pandemic. We had many staff members needing to self-isolate because of this, and we currently have 3 staff members on long term sick, 2 of which currently have long Covid. These staff members are being reviewed regularly by Occupational Health and have also been offered counselling and support via Simplyhealth.

Challenges and Priorities



We will continue to monitor and support staff health and well-being, especially those on long term sickness dealing with long COVID by promoting the Simplyhealth Scheme which offers one to one counselling, sign posting to mental health organisations for support, monitoring sickness levels and referring to Occupational Health where required.



Line managers will continue to complete tailored back to work interviews for all staff when returning from a period of sickness and supporting flexible working requests for those who have been working from home. We will also continue to resolve any issues that may be of concern to staff returning to the workplace and put in place any extra measures that may be necessary.



EU Settlement Scheme checks are being completed for all employees who are not UK citizens to ensure that they have a right to work status in line with the new requirements that came into force in June this year.



We aim to implement a COVID vaccination policy and update all recruitment documentation to include information regarding the compulsory vaccinations for all care home staff along with putting together a log and obtaining evidence from all employees and new staff to show that they have been fully vaccinated in line with the new legislation that comes into force in November 2021.



To continue to recruit for care staff at Rockdale House, this has been incredibly difficult since the COVID pandemic and we have seen a huge decline in applications for roles at Rockdale House following this.



To organise a recruitment open day at Rockdale so that potential candidates can see what we do and what we offer in terms of roles at Rockdale Lodge and Rockdale House.



HR Drop ins have now re-commenced in person at Rockdale Lodge, these are held on the first Wednesday of every month and have so far been successful. The drop in's will help support staff with concerns or queries and help promote our open-door policy.



To organise regular staff team building activities to help re connect with colleagues, improve staff morale and employee relations in order to work in a more collaborative way.



Issue a further staff survey before Christmas to gather feedback and update the action plan which will then be communicated to staff.

Health and Safety

The health, safety and wellbeing of our residents, staff and visitors is a priority and is monitored and controlled continuously throughout the year.

Covid-19 Pandemic

We, like most organisations, had to react promptly to Covid-19, in order to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our staff and residents and to comply with Government restrictions on social movement. Fortunately, we were able to continue operating, introducing Covid Secure arrangements for site based staff and equipping all other staff to be able to work from home.

To protect as much as possible against Covid-19 we invested significantly in infection control and have kept a degree of restrictions in place as a precaution after the lifting of Government restrictions in England. Care Home restrictions and guidelines as outlined by the CQC have been fully adhered to.

We also recognised that care and support staff roles demand close personal contact which carries increased risk of Covid-19 exposure, staff do however, have access to PPE and comprehensive testing to protect themselves and our residents.




Risk Assessments

We continue to conduct either external or internal risk assessments and review our health & safety policies on a regular basis, these include Fire Risk assessments, Legionella and Asbestos. We have also invested in new software (BrightSafe) to store policies and risk assessments in a single portal. BrightSafe also contains training materials which all staff have access to.

Training

Most Health and Safety training needs are a standard requirement and are now being managed by senior managers using the in-house training modules through Social Care TV. Other training courses are either undertaken on-site by visiting course providers or by staff attendance at relevant training centres.

COVID-19 also meant that we had to restrict access to our site to some of our contractors and some major works were postponed. However, in late 2021 we have begun to make up ground and have completed two projects which improve safety in our properties:




-  Upgraded a number of fire doors at our rented and leasehold properties
-  Installed a second lift in Beatrice Wilson House with evacuation capacity
-  Replaced flooring and industrial cleaning equipment in the Care Home Laundry room

Charitable Support





As a regulated charitable small housing association, everything we do is with a social purpose. Rockdale's aspiration is that people deserving of its services should not be excluded from accessing them for reasons of financial hardship. The Association shall take positive steps to identify such eligible cases.

As a charity we continue, where possible, supporting those residents to move into residential care who cannot meet the full cost of care.

Our Care Home:

-  Rockdale holds a designated reserve, called Access to Care Fund. This is used to help residents to access our services. All charitable donations are credited to the fund, unless specifically donated by the donor for a different purpose.
-  We aim to provide a certain proportion of the Care Home rooms for residents with limited funds and report against this annually.
-  In some cases where the fees top-up demanded by the local authority cannot be funded personally. We consider offering additional financial assistance from the Care Fund to permit entry to the Care Home.

Our Independent Living Apartments:

-  Through our Care and Assessment Committee we aim to identify deserving cases and this evaluation includes financial hardship. A certain proportion of apartments will be for the benefit of such applicants, and we report against this annually.
-  We provide a 'Home Help service at a low cost to help those residents who need more support within their apartment.
-  We provide a low-cost handyman service.
-  We subsidise 'The Pantry' which provides good quality, hot meals for residents at a low cost.

Finance

At its meeting in November 2021, the Board approved a proposal to change the financial year of the Association from 31st December 2021 to March 2022. Going forward, the Association will report for a fifteen-month accounting period to March 2022 and then set annual budgets for future financial years 2022/23 henceforth.

Appendix 1 shows the Associations final accounts for the year to December 20 and Appendices 2-3 show the forecast income and Expenditure and Balance Sheet for the period 2021 to 2025.

In 2020, the Association made an operating loss of £98,635, mostly attributable to increased re-letting times influenced by lockdowns. We also recognised actuarial losses on our pension schemes of £220,000 making the reported loss for the year £318,636.

In 2021, the Association has incurred further losses, again experiencing voids especially after the instruction from Public Health England to Care Homes placing a bar on new admissions between 11th January and 1st March.

These losses have been met from reserves, with investment and cash balances decreasing as below:

31st December 2019 - £6,215k



31st December 2020 - £6,146k

30th September 2021 - £5,479k



£300k of the decrease in 2021 reflects the cash purchase of 2 Webbs Meadow. A further withdrawal of £330k is scheduled for January 2022 to support major capital projects completing in late 2021.

The Association will record a deficit in 2021/22 and a small deficit, forecast at £74,000 in 2022/23, before returning to making modest surpluses.

Challenges and Priorities

-  Review resident access to payment strategy, to offer different payment options for residents by using technology to enable e.g direct debit payments. Aim to become a cashless Association.
-  To re-establish a strong, stable financial position despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic, keeping tight control and oversight on costs associated with PPE and staffing. Working closely with Rockdale House and Senior Management Team to ensure new admissions are dealt with promptly to reduce ongoing void loss.


Finance continued


-  Embed new finance data base (including the rent ledger) and provide comprehensive staff training. Undertake a major update of financial procedures to reflect the new processes required.
-  To develop an IT strategy that aims to align technology and operations with business goals. It will set out objectives that will show how our current and future technology will be implemented and used. It will also demonstrate how we will protect our digital data, such as those held on our database from unauthorised users, such as cyberattack or a data breach.


Value for Money


Our main priority for 2022 is re-establish a strong, stable financial position despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic. We are looking at ways to raise income by allocating our vacant properties and implementing our two-tier charges in our Care Home. We are very keen to protect services from cuts and recognise the need to ensure services remain sustainable.


The Association demonstrates Value for Money by:-

-  Ensuring Value for Money is embedded through all decision-making processes

-  Setting clear strategic objectives

-  Having a framework of strategies, policies and processes in place to ensure optimal benefits are achieved for both assets and resources.

-  Ensuring services are cost-effective, efficient and customer driven.





-  Recruiting and retaining the best staff to deliver our services.

We strive to achieve value for money across all departments and undertake regular reviews in areas of high-value costs such as those associated with repair work, maintenance contracts and utility costs. We work hard to negotiate cost-effective contracts and have reviewed our supplier list in 2021 to deliver this key objective.

Environmental impact

The association is committed to serving the best interests of our residents and the local community by protecting and actively promoting the improvement of our environment.

The Association aims to comply with the requirements of the local authority environmental codes of practice and we endeavour to:

-  Reduce pollutions, emissions and waste by
-  Using local business for essential services and supplies
-  Examining purchase order quantities and delivery frequency
-  Ensuring domestic refuse, old furniture and non-electrical equipment is sorted correctly and recycled where possible.

We require all contractors to comply with our environmental standards.

Sustainability

Rockdale is committed to the UK policy to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050 and by 45% by 2030.

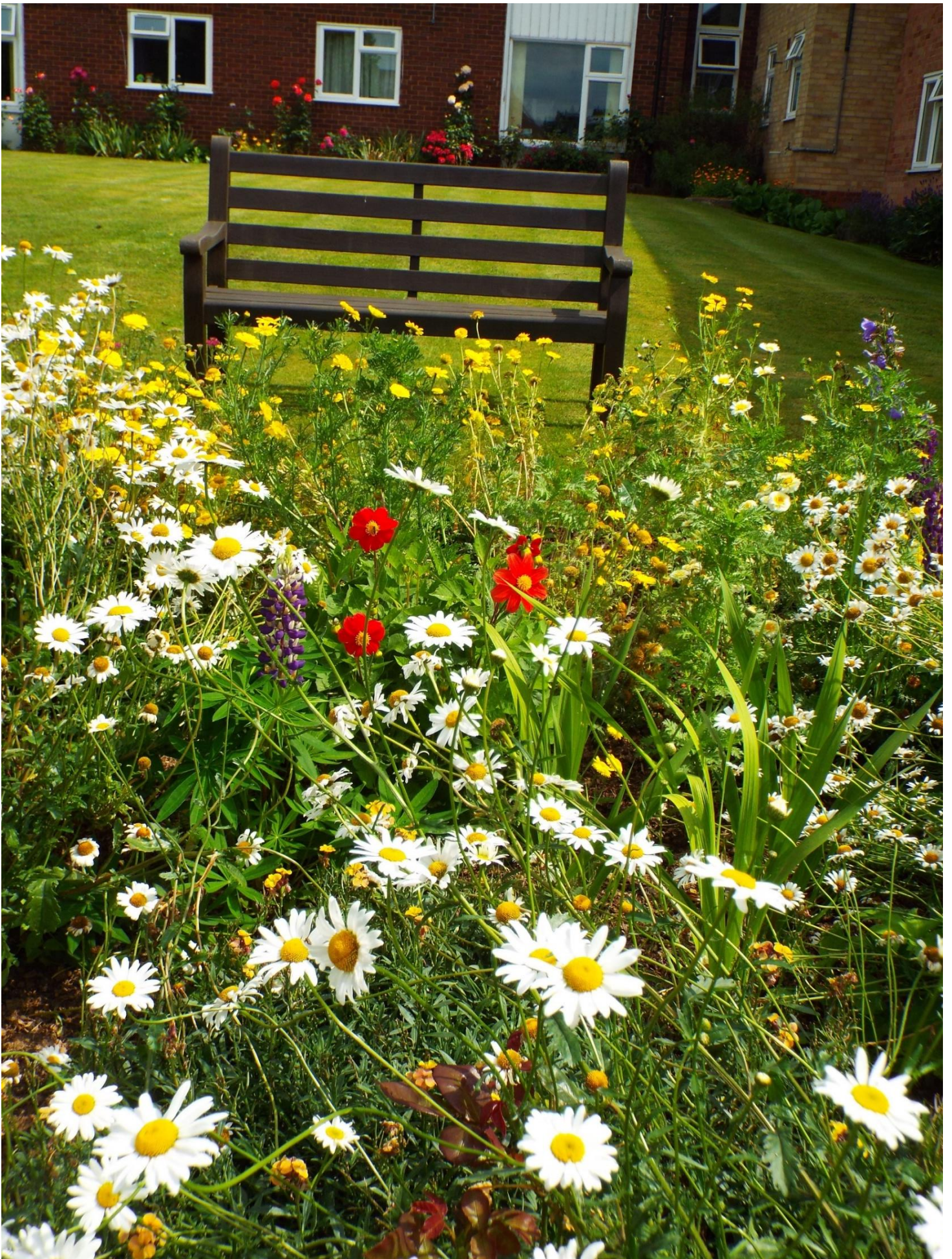
We will ensure that our future procurement of energy will involve consideration of whether we can utilise energy from renewable sources and install better storage technologies.

We will conduct annual energy efficiency audits with our suppliers and involve residents as to how they can contribute to reduced use of energy.

Refurbishment of our properties will consider replacing carbon inefficient heating and lighting with more efficient equipment. We obtain Energy Performance Certificates for all void properties and, where practicable, make the recommended improvements before re-letting. Beatrice Wilson House properties are currently rated C or even B, but there are some properties in Rockdale Gardens which are rated D and capable of having improvements made.

We will consider if there is potential for on-site generation projects, such as solar panels and undertake to offset our carbon emissions with increased tree planting.

The cost of converting our properties will need to be factored into future financial plans. This could have a significant impact.





Rockdale Housing Association Limited is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing No. LH0869 and is a charitable Registered Society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 no. 13507R

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