



Value for money

Our Value for Money Strategy

We are committed to embedding Value for Money throughout our governance processes, business planning and performance management frameworks, and through our service delivery culture. We recognise that value for money plays a vital role in the achievement of our strategic objectives and in supporting our ongoing viability and future growth.

The overall aim of our Value for Money Strategy is:

“to ensure our strategic and charitable objectives are achieved through the efficient, effective and economic use and management of resources at both the strategic and operational levels while delivering equitable outcomes for stakeholders and minimising our impact on the environment.”

Our approach to Value for Money

The Regulatory Standards require registered providers to review and understand their performance against the Value for Money technical metrics set by the Regulator of Social Housing, as well as their own Value for Money targets.

Targets are set annually by our Board based on the approved budget for the year, ensuring they include the strategic objectives contained within Plan A. To ensure that our Board considers the effect of their decisions on the technical metrics established by the Regulator, they are provided with a three year forecast of the technical metrics when setting the annual budget and a thirty year forecast when approving the Business Plan. These forecasts also include our historical performance for each metric and a comparison against the sector as a whole (all registered providers in England with over 1,000 properties) divided into quartiles.

In our analysis below we also consider performance against our Northeast Peer group as defined by the Regulator in their Global Accounts 2023.

Measuring Value for Money – our own performance targets

Our performance management framework is used to measure Value for Money and is monitored and reported to Board on a quarterly basis. Challenging targets are approved each year with key strategic objectives reported on separately so performance against Plan A can be clearly seen.

Our performance management framework was developed to include the 22 new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) which came into force on 1 April 2023. Twelve of these measures are collected via an annual tenant perception survey and the remaining 10 are collected from management information. We used this first year of recording TSM data to baseline our performance and inform our targets which will be set for 2024/25.



Our performance against key indicators is set out in the table below:

Performance Measure	Target (2023/24)	Result (2023/24)
Transforming Customer Experience and Digital Services		
Percentage of customers satisfied with the overall customer experience	88.00%	87.48%
Percentage of complainants satisfied with the way the complaint was handled	91.50%	93.94%
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their views are being listened to and acted upon	95.50%	96.00%
Net Promoter Score	51	53.39
Planet A		
Total scope 1 and 2 CO ₂ emissions	170 tonnes	186.16 tonnes
Total CO ₂ emissions per property	2.5 tonnes	2.69 tonnes
Supporting Sustainable Places		
Total number of customers into employment (*see note below re sustainability measures)	350	352
Percentage of sustainable homes	95.50%	95.72%
Total Social Value achieved through social, economic and environmental interventions in communities supported/ delivered by Livin	£11.03m	£29.69m
Improvement score of sustainable communities' indicators - place making communities	18	17

Our performance against key indicators is set out in the tables

Supporting Sustainable Tenancies		
Total rent arrears as a percentage of the rent due (excluding void properties)	3.04%	2.94%
Average re-let time (calendar days) standard properties (excluding major works)	28 days	26 days
Turnover of tenancies as a percentage of overall stock	8.05%	7.51%
Percentage of tenancies using digital means of managing their tenancy	50.00%	51.02%
Percentage of tenants with improved financial confidence following financial inclusion support	90.00%	100.00%
Providing Quality Sustainable Homes		
Percentage of previously identified poorly performing assets addressed and subsequently let/disposed	89.00%	77.06%
Number of properties achieving SAP band C	8,160	7,710
Average SAP score of all properties	72.50	72.38
Percentage of tenants satisfied with planned works	92.00%	88.30%
Percentage of jobs completed at first visit	95.00%	97.24%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs	86.00%	84.89%
Average time taken to complete repairs (calendar days)	12 days	16.32 days
Percentage of damp and mould cases closed within 33 working days	100%	47.3%
Compliance metrics		
Percentage of properties compliant with all safety checks	100%	99.42%
Percentage of properties with a valid electrical safety check	100%	99.65%
Percentage of properties with a valid solid fuel safety check	100%	100%
Percentage of properties with a valid lift service	100%	94.07%
Percentage of properties with a valid lift inspection	100%	95.27%
Percentage of properties with a valid water hygiene check	100%	100%

Our performance against key indicators is set out in the tables

Compliance metrics		
Percentage of properties with a valid asbestos survey	100%	99.9%
Percentage of non-domestic assets covered by current asbestos survey	100%	100%
Percentage of communal areas and shared spaces with a valid fire risk assessment	100%	100%
Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes		
Number of new units developed and acquired	239	233
Percentage of units secured against Business Plan targets over a three-year period	85.00%	100.96%
New supply delivered (development and acquisitions) - Social housing (VfM Metric 2)	2.68%	2.70%
Total stock number (including leaseholders)	8,932	8,949
Number of new build homes developed and acquired, cumulative over 3 years	338	332
Average SAP rating of land led homes completed	86	85.07
Average SAP rating of acquisitions completed	84	84.04
Percentage of new homes approved which are suitable for older persons and/or disabled people	24.00%	24.05%
Tenant Satisfaction Measures		
Overall satisfaction (TP01)	To be set in 2024/25	89.69%
Satisfaction with repairs (TP02)	To be set in 2024/25	87.89%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair (TP03)	To be set in 2024/25	85.80%
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained (TP04)	To be set in 2024/25	86.74%
Satisfaction that the home is safe (TP05)	To be set in 2024/25	89.07%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenants' views and acts upon them (TP06)	To be set in 2024/25	83.04%

Our performance against key indicators is set out in the tables

Tenant Satisfaction Measures		
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them (TP07)	To be set in 2024/25	83.83%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect (TP08)	To be set in 2024/25	90.62%
Satisfaction with landlord's approach to handling complaints (TP09)	To be set in 2024/25	48.09%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained (TP10)	To be set in 2024/25	77.22%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods (TP11)	To be set in 2024/25	80.25%
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of ASB (TP12)	To be set in 2024/25	74.53%
Stage 1 complaints received per 1,000 homes (CH01a)	To be set in 2024/25	8.7
Stage 2 complaints received per 1,000 homes (CH01b)	To be set in 2024/25	0.9
Stage 1 complaints responded to in target time (CH02a)	To be set in 2024/25	100%
Stage 2 complaints responded to in target time (CH02b)	To be set in 2024/25	100%
Anti-social behaviour cases received per 1,000 homes (NM01a)	To be set in 2024/25	44.4
Hate crimes received per 1,000 homes (NM01b)	To be set in 2024/25	0.2
Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard (RP01)	0	0
Non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale (RP02a)	To be set in 2024/25	79.3%
Emergency repairs completed within target timescale (RP02b)	To be set in 2024/25	98.9%
Gas safety checks (BS01)	100%	99.98%
Fire safety checks (BS02)	100%	100%

Our performance against key indicators is set out in the tables

Tenant Satisfaction Measures		
Asbestos safety checks (BS03)	100%	100%
Water safety checks (BS04)	N/A	N/A
Lift safety checks (BS05)	N/A	N/A

Financial Metrics		
EBITDA MRI as a % of turnover	13.7%	9.74%
Accuracy of Interest Cover forecasts	90.0%	93.5%
Average vfm score	1.57	1.71

At year end our performance highlighted nine high level indicators which failed to meet target. The new tenant satisfaction measures have been used to set targets within the 2024/25 performance framework.

Although the targets for Planet A were not achieved, it is important to note that this is still a relatively new area of measurement and as such the target for Scope 1 and 2 emissions was based on estimated targets. Data collection has improved enabling more accurate target setting.

Total CO₂ emissions per property did not meet target. There is a national issue with the transfer of data which meant that energy efficiency works completed during the year were not captured for this measure. We use the SAVA IE system to measure the energy performance of our homes and an agreement reached between

SAVA and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities means that data can now be transferred and updated in 2024/25.

The percentage of previously identified poorly performing assets addressed and subsequently let/disposed did not meet target with a score of 77.06% compared to a target of 89.0%. Assets appraisals were completed for all 97 identified properties and despite 84 not requiring further intervention they were not all let at year end. Thirteen units requiring interventions were unable to have works completed due to budget constraints. Work on these units is now planned for 2024/25.

The number of units achieving SAP band C did not meet target due to delays in the SHDF wave 2 project and a number of tenants omitting their homes from our energy efficiency programme. We have



increased the number of resident liaison officers to support tenants and have increased the types of energy efficiency upgrades being offered to improve performance.

The average time taken to complete repairs was also outside of target due to the significant increase in the number of repairs requested during the year. We have sought to mitigate this through more efficient working practices rather than increasing resources which would ultimately increase the cost of the repairs and maintenance contract and reduce resources elsewhere. Improvements

in managing van stock, zonal working and increasing multi-skilled operatives has resulted in improvements in this area.

The percentage of damp and mould cases closed within 33 working days failed to meet target. This measure is a combination of the time taken to carry out an inspection and the time taken to complete the mould treatment. Additional repairs inspectors were employed to address the backlog of inspections further increasing the number of cases identified, however this improvement did not enable the target to be met

due to the size of the backlog at the start of the year following our proactive approach to encourage customers to report issues. During the year our contractor also increased resources and their capacity to complete damp and mould remediation work. We continue to try to access properties where access is being refused and prioritise tenants with known vulnerabilities. Damp and mould performance remains a spotlight measure monitored by Board.

The percentage of properties with a valid lift service was 94.07% and did not meet target of 100%. At the year end seven properties had overdue lift maintenance visits due to difficulties in gaining access to the properties.

EBITDA MRI as a % of turnover failed to meet target due to increased capital expenditure on the Courts regeneration scheme at Shildon.

Average VfM score was 1.71 and failed to meet the target of 1.57, this is covered in more detail below.

Seven measures were below target but within tolerance.

The percentage of tenants satisfied with planned works failed to reach the target. 20 of 171 respondents were either neutral or dissatisfied with the quality of the improvement works. The reasons for dissatisfaction are analysed monthly with actions taken to improve the service, including

increasing the number of quality checks undertaken.

The percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs highlighted 351 respondents were either neutral or dissatisfied with their repair. The results were analysed monthly to identify specific types of repairs that customers were dissatisfied with, and feedback shared with operatives and supervisors to improve future performance. We have appointed a surveying manager to work with our contractor to further improve performance.

Three building and acquiring sustainable homes measures failed to meet target but were within tolerance. Two of these related to six homes being delayed at the Laburnum Grove site due to poor weather.

The other measure was the average SAP rating of land led homes which failed to meet target as the 107 homes completed during the year included several units which were delayed from 2022/23 and designed to earlier building standards.

The percentage of properties with a valid landlord gas certificate was within tolerance with two overdue gas services at year end. Both were due to difficulties gaining access to the properties and were completed shortly after the year end.

Eight thorough lift inspections were unable to be carried out at year end due to difficulties in accessing

the properties. All eight customers have been contacted after year end to arrange a thorough lift inspection.

In addition to the above metrics three sustainability performance measures are reported for

loan agreement purposes. The “Total customers supported in employment” (included above) is one of the three sustainability measures. The other two measures are:

Performance Measure	Target	Result
Percentage of existing housing properties at 1 April 2022 with EPC rating C or above	90.0%	86.3%
Completed new build properties with EPC B and above (cumulative from 1 April 2022)	338	332

The percentage of existing properties at EPC rating C or above failed to meet target due to delays in energy efficiency works and tenants refusing works.

The number of new build properties with an EPC rating of B or above missed target due to the six completions at Laburnum Grove which were delayed due to the weather.



Value for Money Performance – Regulators Metrics

In addition to the performance measures used to track progress against strategic objectives, we also use the Regulator’s VfM metrics to measure our performance, setting targets based on the Board approved Business Plan.

When considering the headline social housing cost per unit performance we consider that lower cost is better as this demonstrates greater efficiency when considered alongside the delivery of key strategic objectives as measured in our performance framework.

We operate in a deprived area where social rents are below national averages and repairs and maintenance costs are also lower than other areas. We review this performance alongside decent home compliance, our commitment to repairs being right first time and resolving damp and mould issues, thereby ensuring we provide a quality repairs service, and maintain properties to a high standard whilst protecting our operating margin and the longer term viability of our social housing assets.

	Value for Money metric	Target	Performance
1	Reinvestment %	19.6%	21.3%
2a	New Supply Delivered % (Social Housing Units)	2.68%	2.70%
2b	New Supply Delivered % (Non- Social Housing Units)	0%	0%
3	Gearing %	57.5%	57.1%
4	EBITDA MRI Interest Cover %	101.0%	76.2%
5	Headline Social Housing cost per unit	£4,264	£4,388
6a	Operating Margin % (Social Housing Lettings only)	14.8%	18.7%
6b	Operating Margin % (overall)	18.1%	22.6%
7	Return on Capital Employed %	3.6%	4.0%

EBITDA MRI Interest cover failed to meet the target for two main reasons. Additional major repairs expenditure was incurred during the year on energy efficiency works. This highlights our commitment to meeting our SAP banding target and reducing the costs of heating homes for our customers. We utilised social housing decarbonisation fund grant to deliver this work, however, the grant received is specifically excluded from this VfM metric.

The second reason was an increase in capital expenditure relating to our regeneration scheme at the Courts, Shildon. Following independent adjudication additional costs were incurred relating to service diversion works.

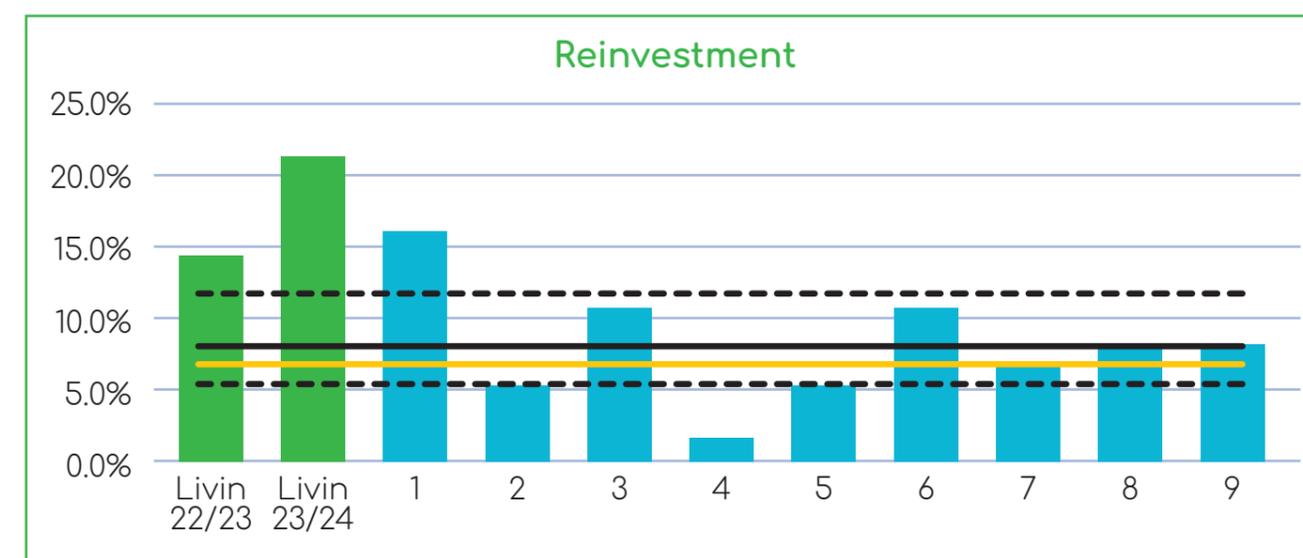
These two factors also impacted on the Headline Social Housing Cost per unit measure preventing that metric from meeting its target but being within tolerance.



Value for Money Performance – Peer Group Comparison

The tables below compare our performance in 2023/24 against the 9 other members of the Northeast Peer Group as defined in the Regulator’s Global Accounts 2023 (latest set available at the time of preparing this report). The dashed

black lines on each graph show the upper and lower quartiles for the Peer Group with the solid black line being the Peer Group median. The solid orange line is the sector median as per the Regulator’s Global Accounts 2023.



Reinvestment

Our performance was top quartile in comparison to both our regional peer group and the sector as a whole. During the year we invested in new social housing properties, with 233 additions to our housing stock. Our plans are on track to reach our ambitious target of 9,000 homes by March 2025.

Our plans include delivering increased volumes of major works, including further energy efficiency works with the assistance of SHDF grant which will assist in reducing customer’s heating costs.



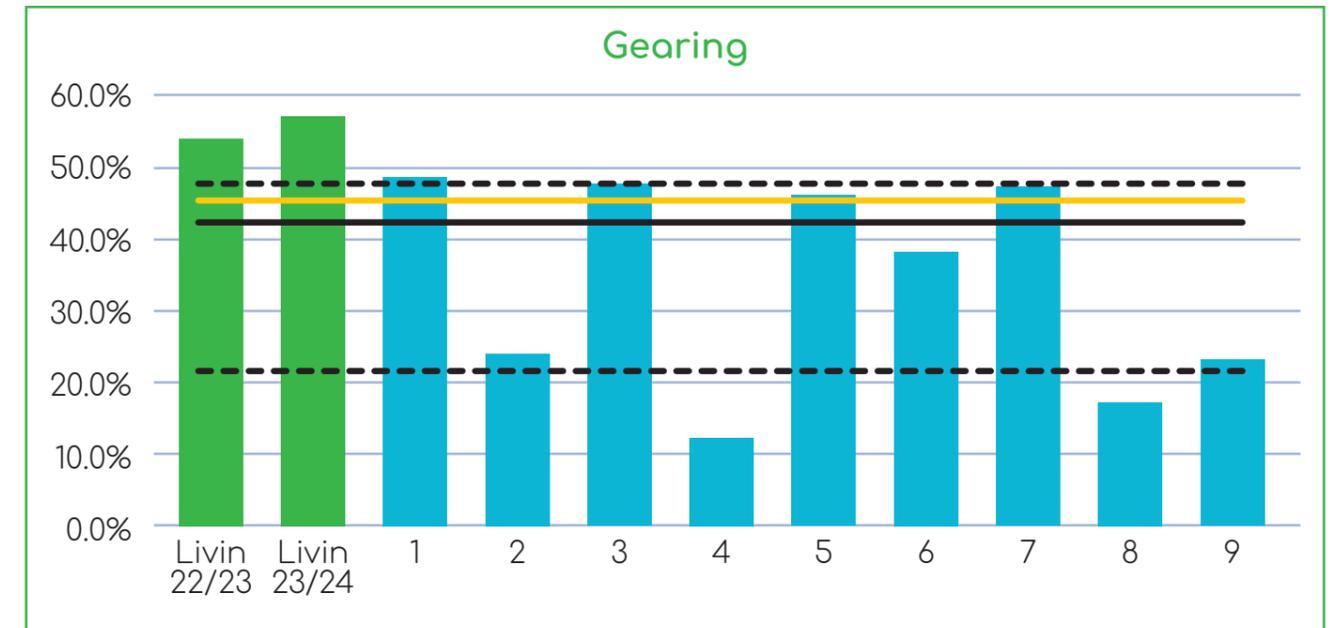
New supply delivered (Social Housing)

This is an area where our performance improved placing us in the top quartile when compared to our peer group and the sector as a whole. Delays in the completion of 51 homes in 2022/23 resulted in these being completed in 2023/24 and significantly improving our performance. We continue to build or acquire 2 to 4 bedroom properties for affordable rent while looking to increase the number of homes suitable for elderly or disabled persons.

Our ambitious development programme aims to deliver 661 new homes over the next 6 years with 295 of these being delivered within the next 2 years. At the end of the financial year, we had already secured 101% of our next three year’s development target.

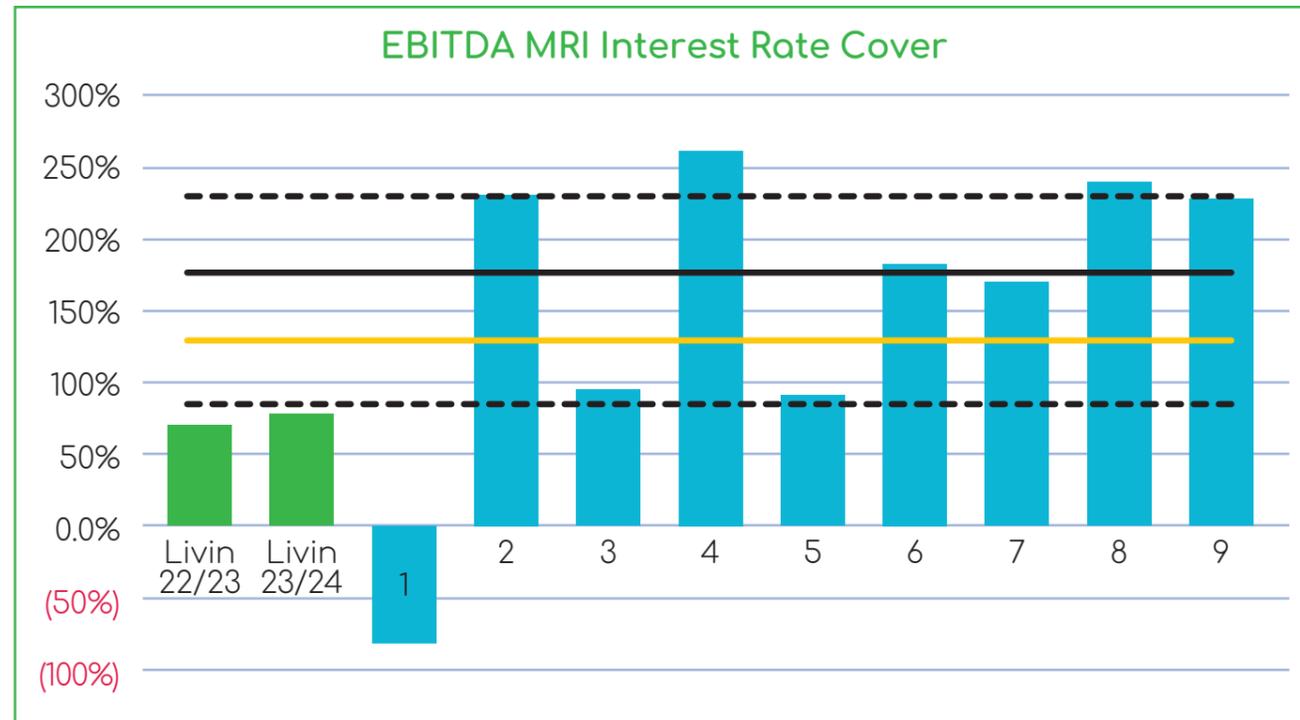
New supply delivered (Non-Social Housing)

This is an area in which only three of the peer group delivered properties. Our strategy focuses on delivering new much needed Affordable Housing or Low Cost Home Ownership properties therefore we do not expect this metric to increase in future years.



Gearing

This was top quartile when compared to both our peer group and the sector as a whole. In April 2024 we increased one of our revolving credit facilities by £10m and extended the term for two additional years. This liquidity will enable us to continue with our Plan A strategic objectives. Gearing is not a major limiting factor to our development capacity and does not restrict our future development plans.

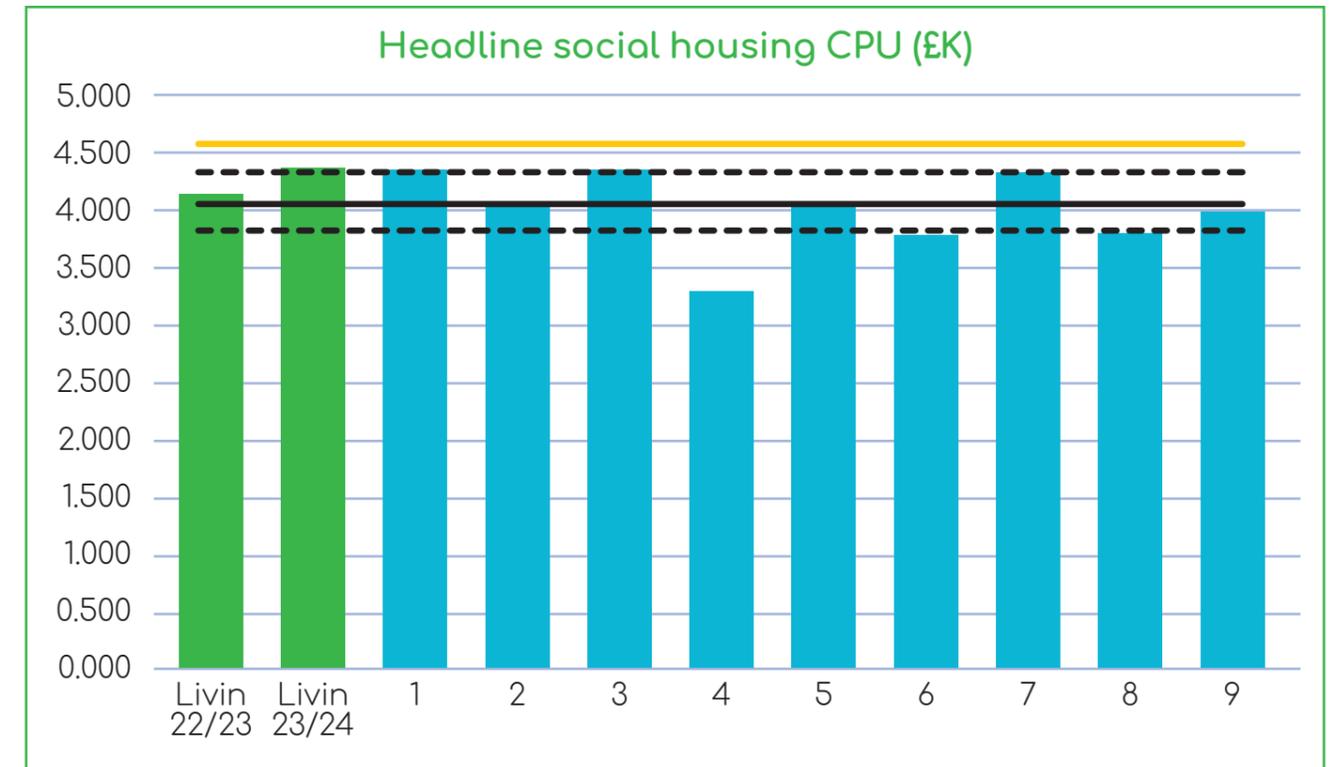


EBITDA MRI Interest cover

This has fallen to lower quartile when compared to our peer group and the sector as a whole. The Regulator’s quarterly survey (Q4 January to March 2024) indicated that levels of interest cover have deteriorated across the sector and are set to remain depressed in the short term. Our liquidity and viability remain strong but performance against this metric has fallen due to additional costs for diversion works at the Courts regeneration scheme and our commitment to energy efficiency works.

We continue to utilise the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund grant we received, partially offsetting the grant against capital expenditure incurred on the energy efficiency works completed during the year. Grant of £0.662m was received but is specifically excluded from the calculation of this VfM metric which reduced performance by 12%.

We expect this metric to improve in the short-term as we complete our Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund energy efficiency measures and benefit from higher levels of rent due to the homes that were completed during the year.



Headline Social Housing Cost per Unit

Performance was lower quartile compared to our regional peer group and upper median compared to the sector as a whole.

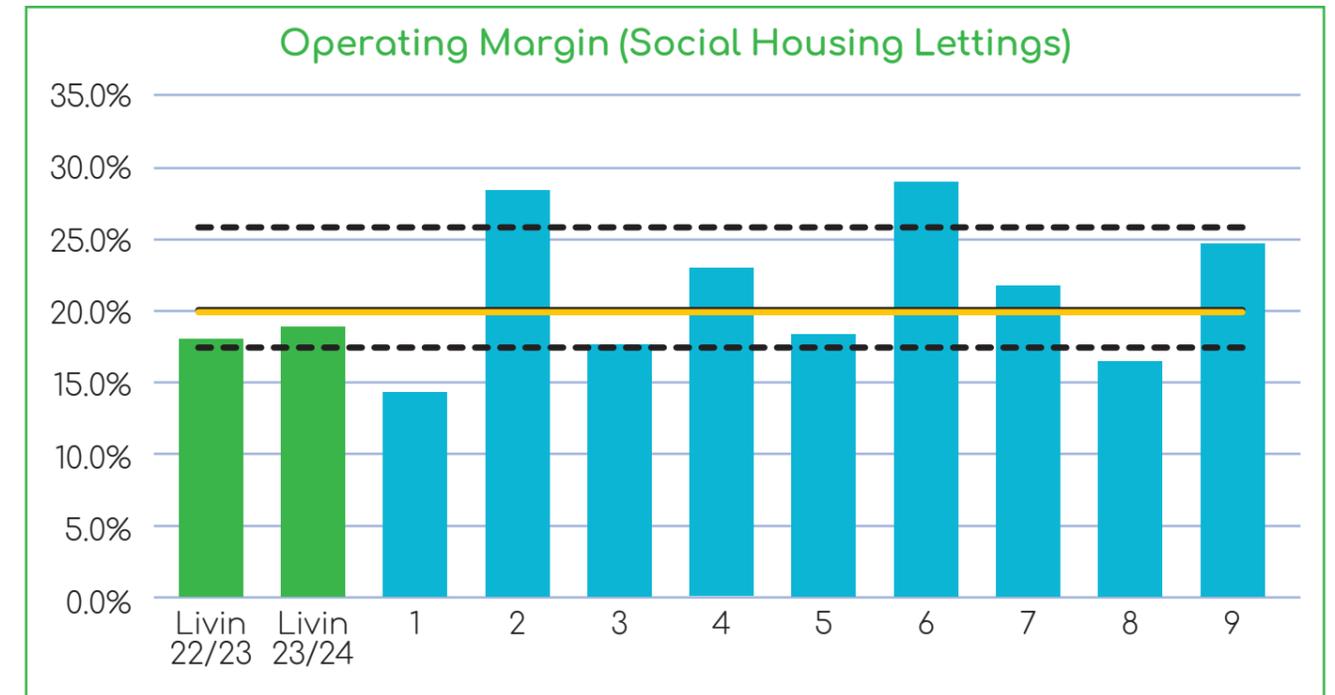
Social housing cost per unit increased by £230 as shown in the next table. This was a result of a combination of factors: Management costs have decreased by £110 per property due to the annual actuaries adjustment to pension costs; Repairs costs have increased by £267 per property as a result of inflationary cost pressures, increased level of works completed on void properties and treatment of damp and mould. Major works costs have increased by £51 per property as a result of accelerated component replacement work to take advantage of the Vat shelter agreement which expired in March 2024 but allowed the recovery of Vat on first time replacement components.

Understanding our Social Housing Cost per Unit

Our social housing cost per unit is reported as part of our regulatory value for money metrics. This can be further analysed as shown below:

	2023/24	2022/23	Performance
Management costs	£1,007	£1,117	(£110)
Repairs	£1,608	£1,341	£267
Major works	£1,619	£1,568	£51
Service charges	£29	£21	£8
Other	£125	£111	£14
Total	£4,388	£4,158	£230

During the year we performed an in-depth review of our repairs costs as these had been identified as being lower compared to the sector as a whole. The review included comparisons with benchmarking groups and data from registered providers and found that our allocation of costs did not align with other organisations. Previously, in-house employee costs relating to repairs and major works had been classified within management expenses rather than as repairs. We have since reclassified these in-house employee costs under repairs and major works. Adjustments have been made to 2022/23 to accurately represent this change and clarify the yearly trends.

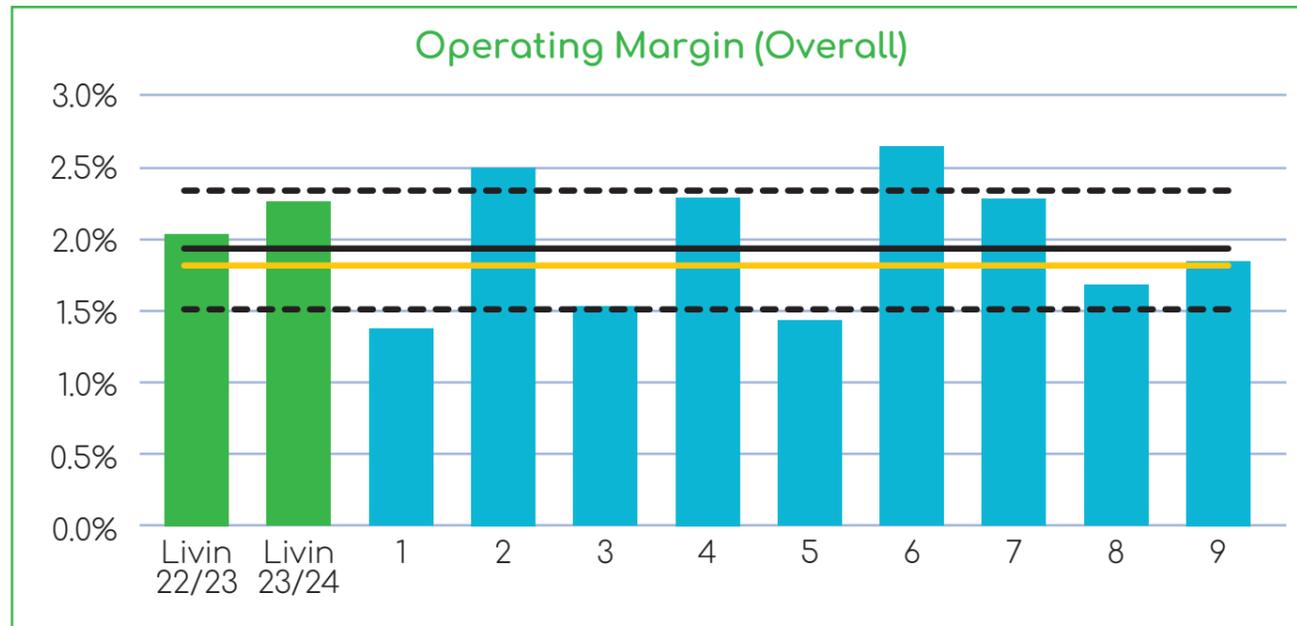


Operating Margin Social Housing Lettings

This performance improved from 18.3% to 18.7% which placed us in the lower median quartile when compared to both our peer group and the sector as a whole. Our cost base increased due to increased employee costs, repairs and maintenance costs, impairment charges for properties earmarked for sale at the Courts regeneration scheme and increased depreciation charges a result of new developments and increased major expenditure on existing homes. These were offset by the increase in annual rental income therefore slightly improving our social housing margin.

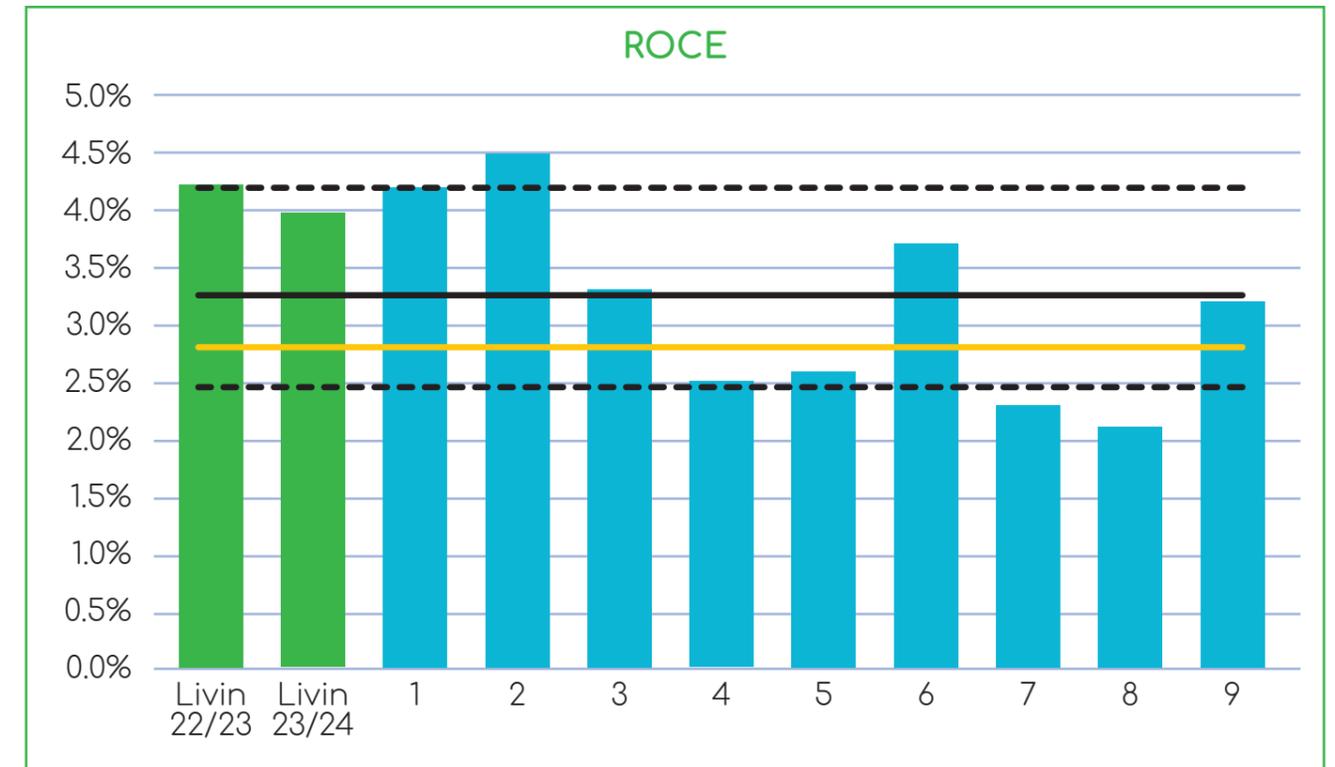
We continue to operate in areas where our average weekly rent charge is relatively low compared to the majority of our peer group. These lower than average rental charges mean our social housing lettings margin is relatively low.

This metric is, however, forecast to improve over the next four years as increased costs and housing depreciation are more than offset by the increased rental income received from new affordable rent properties and the inflationary increases applied to existing social housing rents.



Operating Margin Overall

This performance improved to upper median quartile compared to the Northeast peer group, and remained upper median quartile compared to the sector as a whole. Our operating margin performance overall improved from 20.3% last year to 22.6% assisted by strong margins on commercial lets and other turnover. Our performance is expected to fall in the next year to 20.0% and remain at a similar level for a further five years. This is partly due to our prudent Business Plan assumptions before the positive impact of rental income from completed developments takes effect.



Return on Capital Employed (ROCE) %

This performance has fallen to upper median quartile when compared to the Northeast peer group but remains in the top quartile when compared to the sector as a whole. ROCE is expected to fall next year, as further capital is employed to deliver our ambitious development programme and as we invest in energy efficiency measures to deliver our strategic objective of 97% of properties achieving EPC band C or above by 2025.

Overall Performance

The Board aims to achieve a balanced performance across the Regulator of Social Housing's Value for Money technical metrics, aiming for our blended average performance to be above median across the technical metrics as a whole.

Our methodology for this is to apply a score of 1 for best quartile performance and 4 for worst quartile performance. We reverse the headline social housing cost per unit as previously mentioned and using this methodology, historical, current and future performance is shown in the table below (when compared to the sector as a whole based upon the 2023 Global Accounts):

Metric	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25 forecast		2025/26 forecast		2026/27 forecast	
	Performance	Quartile	Performance	Quartile	Performance	Quartile	Performance	Quartile	Performance	Quartile
Reinvestment %	14.5%	1	21.3%	1	14.2%	1	11.3%	1	8.2%	2
New supply delivered – social housing (%)	1.3%	3	2.7%	1	1.9%	2	1.4%	2	1.0%	3
Gearing (%)	53.8%	1	57.1%	1	58.8%	1	59.5%	1	59.1%	1
EBITDA MRI Interest Cover (%)	88.8%	4	76.2%	4	133%	2	121%	3	157%	2
Headline Social Housing Cost Per Unit (£)	£4,158	3	£4,388	2	£4,113	2	£4,252	2	£4,114	2
Operating Margin (Overall)	22.2%	2	22.6%	2	20.0%	2	20.9%	2	20.4%	2
Return on Capital Employed	4.6%	1	4.0%	1	3.7%	1	3.7%	1	3.6%	1
Average for all metrics		2.1		1.71		1.57		1.71		1.86

An organisation which demonstrated median performance in all measures would show an average performance of 2.5. Our overall performance in all years under review is better than this average.

Using this methodology for measuring performance against the Northeast Peer Group, our performance was also in the top quartile.

Measurable plans to address underperformance

The Board has considered those areas where performance against the Value for Money technical metrics, defined by the Regulator of Social Housing, are below median when compared with the sector as a whole.

In 2024/25 performance is forecast to be strong with metrics expected to be above the sector median.

In future years there are two metrics forecast to be below the sector median; they are **EBITDA MRI Interest Cover** and **New supply delivered**.

EBITDA MRI Interest Cover % is forecast to fall in 2025/26 due to increased levels of major repairs and interest payable. Heating, window and kitchen replacement schemes are being accelerated to create operational capacity and avoid potential supply issues in future years. Additional borrowings will be required to fund developments which will increase interest costs.

New supply delivered is forecast to fall in 2026/27 as development targets are reduced. Our original development programme to March 2030 was front loaded to meet our strategic target of owning and managing 9,000 homes by March 2025. After March 2026 our annual target falls to 95 new homes per annum.

Conclusions

Value for Money is embedded in our culture and governance structure; we appreciate that delivering effective and efficient services benefits our customers and their communities.

Our performance is published separately on our website and referred to in our annual report to tenants enabling further scrutiny of performance.

Performance in 2023/24 shows a continued commitment to Value for Money. In comparison to our peer group and the sector as a whole we are able to demonstrate strong performance against the Technical Metrics defined by the Regulator and have assessed our long-term Business Plans and forecasts in light of these metrics.

We have identified an area where there is underperformance in comparison to other providers, defined as performance which is below median against the sector as a whole. This is EBITDA MRI interest cover and is expected to improve over the next few years and we have explained the reasoning behind this.

The Board is satisfied that our financial plans to deliver our business strategy, Plan A, provides a balanced performance across the value for money metrics and that current performance is achieving above median across the technical metrics as a whole.