



Castle Vale
Community Housing
Part of The Pioneer Group



Annual Tenant Report

2016-17

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Who are we?

Castle Vale Community Housing is a resident led organisation. We manage over 2,400 properties within our social rented portfolio which include a wide range of stock from general needs to supported schemes. We are a community inspired organisation where our policies are created with the support of tenants, residents and partner organisations. We have a clear vision and strong values (below) which are at the heart of everything we do. Within this report we will cover our key performance in all areas of CVCH, highlights from financial year 2016-17, the challenges we faced and what the future holds.



“CVCH has continued to respond to the challenge of reduction in rents imposed by central government. On the one hand we know this is good news for tenants who have less rent to find in what has been a difficult economic climate, but on the other hand the rental income is what we reinvest into services to Castle Vale and we had to make savings.

The changes we made to our structures last year where in part to address this but importantly we saw this as an opportunity to really make sure the new services focussed on what is important to our tenants and the residents of Castle Vale. You will see in this report how

we have really started to deliver against your priorities within the Castle Vale Community Pledge on things like the new Customer 1st Team, partnerships to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and ensuring Castle Vale remains a clean and green place to live.

We continue to Invest in our assets, your home through the improvement programme.

I look forward to the year ahead with my colleagues embedding our new services and shaping these services around what matters most to you.”

Simon Wilson

Housing and Customer
Services Director – Castle Vale Community Housing

Meet CVCH *board and Scrutiny*



Due to government legislation over the last year, Castle Vale Community Housing, has had to face some difficult challenges and had to make some difficult decisions. Necessary changes have been made in the structure of the organisation, and it is a credit to all the staff and board members, that we are tackling these difficult times with little effect on customers. This is an organisation that never stands still, and always strives to be the best landlord, adapting to changing circumstances.

We appear to be facing another year of challenges. As part of the Pioneer Group we are helping to grow and adapt the business to ensure a stable and effective organisation for the future that always puts tenants, and the community first.

Castle Vale's success is largely down to people who have dared to think the unthinkable, seek improvement for a better life, with fresh ideas and solutions. The fact that residents are participating right at the heart of this business is its most positive strength. We expect to be listened to, and at the same time have the humility to listen. I am committed to continue our strong resident representation. The customer will always come first and I will always endeavour to represent the interests of everyone living in our community.

Ken Sims (Castle Vale resident)
Caste Vale Community Housing Chair

The Scrutiny panel

The scrutiny panel is a tenant run panel which supports CVCH to drive efficiency. This panel ensures that policies and procedures are fit for purpose our performance is looked into and challenged if required.

The scrutiny panel work along side our CVCH board in our resident majority governance structure and are the eyes and ears within the community. We are always looking for tenants who would be willing to join our panel.

If this is something that is of interest to you please contact **Becki Winkless** on **0121 478 8134**.

"Being the chair of the scrutiny panel gave me the opportunity to be directly involved with developing policy and procedures which matter most in our community. It is something I really enjoyed.

I became interested in the scrutiny panel several years ago because I learnt a good deal about the effort and involvement that CVCH have to comply with in order to be an efficient company and landlord, which I believe they are. It's also important for tenants to have a voice so CVCH can understand the needs and wishes that could improve the company further in the eyes of their customers.

I would strongly recommend tenants to take any opportunity they can to get involved with CVCH. It gives people an insight into how a landlord works, the way they deal with problems, transparency into more complicated processes such as anti social behaviour or rent arrears and the opportunity to have input into policies and procedures which shape the organisation."

Kay Hunter
Chair of the Scrutiny panel (2016/17)



I have been proud to serve as an elected resident board member in what has been a challenging year. Following on from the change in structure of the organisation I feel that the systems are now in place to continue to deliver services to our tenants. We continue to honour the Community Pledge and monitor that our properties are being maintained to a high standard together with the ongoing boiler and kitchen replacement programmes.



Through the Pioneer Group we worked with Stockland Green in developing a site under Spaghetti Junction at Copeley Hill where homes were built for sale. There were 700 expressions of interest for the 14 homes. We look forward to starting consultations shortly in what we should do with the old police station at the top of the High Street.

I believe we have the strength and support to continue to offer good quality homes on Castle Vale and also in other areas where we are working as the Pioneer Group.

Sue Spicer (CVCH tenant)
Castle Vale Community Housing Board Member

Members of CVCH Board

- Fern Watson** (Tenant)
- John Whitwam** (Independent)
- Amy Mullins-Downes** (Independent)
- David Pipe** (Independent)
- Cllr. Mick Brown** (Co-optee)
- Wendy Walsh** (Tenant)
- Samantha Lowe** (Tenant)

Our Pledge

In 2016/17 we obtained feedback from hundreds of tenants and residents about the services we offer, the community you live in and what the community aspirations are for the future. We have used this information to shape our Castle Vale Community Pledge, committing over £500k per year in additional services to ensure Castle Vale remains a great place to live. Here we explore some of the ways we have delivered on our pledge in 2016/17:-

Meeting Together & having fun

We supported residents of Phoenix Court to form a residents group, organise trips, car boots & activities to reduce isolation within the block. We formed a walking group for residents to attend, exploring the countryside & canal. We provided several meeting places for residents to meet for various free activities such as knitting, arts & crafts, fitness and cooking or just a natter and a catch up with existing and new friends.



Connected!

Our Digital Hub open days increased from one day to three days which resulted in an increase in digital champions! We continue to support residents with e-learning and increasing their digital skills.

Clean, Green and Tidy

In 2016/17 we worked closely with Birmingham City Council in order to improve the cleanliness and look of the estate. In 2017/18 we will continue to focus on the environment and what matters to the community.



We also developed a 'Helping hands' service to fulfil demand for services that fall outside of services CVCH offer within the tenancy agreement.

We reintroduced our 'walk and talk' activities which proved successful and we held a company wide litter pick with involved members of various organisations and residents.

On tap

Maintain a 'Head Office' where customers can, though face to face contact raise queries and concerns.

We committed to retain a head office and ensure that our customers had multiple ways to communicate with us. We are proud that we can offer a service within the community that is accessible to all.

We love seeing our tenants and residents!



Responsive

Ensure that we spend the money on those things that matter most to residents of all ages.

Feeling safe

Work with partners such as West Midlands Police to keep Castle Vale a safe place to live.

In 2016/17 we saw the launch of the Valewatch agreement. This is a partnership between CVCH, West Midlands Police and Greenwood Academy.

We worked with West Midlands Police to ensure that we retained Police presence in Castle Vale by moving them to a CVCH building due to the closure of the Police Station on the High Street.

We achieve an accreditation with out CCTV service and received praise for demonstrating best practice.



CVCH Here to help

At CVCH we understand this is going to be a challenging time for many of our tenants. We have put a number of things in place to ensure you are ready and are supported through this process.

As long as we have the commitment from our tenants that if they believe they will be negatively impacted by UC and may struggle to pay **please get in touch. We cannot help if we do not know!**



0121 748 8100
contactus@cvch.org.uk
www.cvch.org.uk

Our Customer 1st Team should be your first port of call if you are concerned about Universal Credit. Our advisers will be able to assess your case and sign post you to the right place. Our team are there to support and not judge. Please call if you need us!



0121 748 8100
contactus@cvch.org.uk
www.compass-support.org.uk

We supported Second Pedals to start a 50's+ Arts & Crafts group, CV Pool Group to purchase new equipment for the pool users, Youngstars received a grant for a new cooker and cooking equipment for a community café and cooking sessions for young people and Compass Support received a grant to recover the pool table for use by their youth & employment service!

Help for the Vulnerable Providing Support

Compass (also part of the Pioneer Group) were awarded the contract to deliver careers information and guidance at Greenwood Academy in Castle Vale. This is a great opportunity for our organisation to support the young people in our community.



The Ageing Better programme five year programme of delivery to engage

and support residents to create an Age-friendly Tyburn and reduce social isolation in



Pledge Pot

We supported Second Pedals to start a 50's+ Arts & Crafts group, CV Pool Group to purchase new equipment for the pool users, Youngstars received a grant for a new cooker and cooking equipment for a community café and cooking sessions for young people and Compass Support received a grant to recover the pool table for use by their youth & employment service!



0121 747 5932
spitfireservices.org.uk

CVCH commission Spitfire Services (based on the High Street, Castle Vale) to provide free, confidential and impartial advice for people living in our properties. They will support on a wide range of money, benefit, housing or employment issues.

Stop! Read! Universal Credit is here...

Universal Credit is a new benefit which will replace Housing Benefit, working tax credit, child tax credit, income support, employment and support allowance and job seekers allowance for everyone working age.

This benefit will be paid directly to you and there will only be one payment per household per month. This means that if you and your partner both claim any of the above one of you will get the payment for everything.

This is the biggest change within Welfare reform. It changes how you are paid how your rent is paid, and how you apply to get paid! It also changes the way you will have to manage your money. You will now be in charge of this payment and your rent won't get paid unless you pay it.



Prepare!!!

Your first payment could take a minimum of 7 weeks to arrive. This means 7 weeks with no benefit payments. Putting as much money as possible away running up to going over to UC will help you to avoid falling into debt during this time.

Top tip!

As early as your first UC interview you can request an advance payment to help you through the first 7 weeks. You must be prepared to evidence your outgoing to show that not having a payment for 7 weeks would be detrimental to your families health (e.g not having enough to heat your home or eat). This payment will have to be paid back so trying to save prior to UC will always be the better option!

Know your priorities!

Protecting your home for you and your family is the most important message. Paying to keep your in your home should be the first thing you do each month (rent and council tax).

Ways you can make it easier:

Set up a direct debit for the same day each month. Ideally this should be on the day you receive your UC payment. This will mean that your rent will be paid and we will not take action against you. Going to court can be a very distressing experience. We are here to help you avoid this process however you need to follow the basic principles.

Get banking and get online!

You cannot claim UC if you don't have a bank account. This is a must and everyone should be taking steps to ensure you are ready when you go over to UC. It is coming and you cannot avoid it. UC applications are 100% online. You must be digital!

Your Environment

Estate Services Team

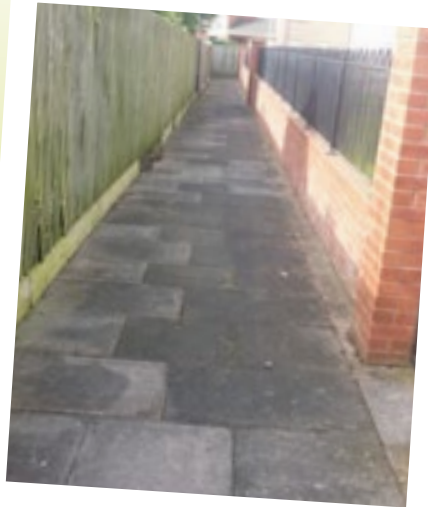
The Estate Services team are a team who's primary responsibility is to provide a full range of services to the defined areas in Castle Vale which are owned by CVCH.

The following duties are covered by this service:

- ✂ Inspect interiors and exteriors of blocks for defects and damage
- ✂ Litter pick CVCH land around blocks, including grassed, shrub and drying areas
- ✂ Sweep and litter pick entrances and parking spaces owned by CVCH
- ✂ Clear leaves from around CVCH land (November to March)
- ✂ Remove graffiti
- ✂ Adjust time clocks in communal areas for communal lighting and trades access
- ✂ Undertake minor landscaping as necessary
- ✂ Undertake minor repairs
- ✂ Remove noxious deposits and effluence



Before



After

Contracted Services

CVCH ensure that any services that require an external provider are managed effectively and in line with our standards of delivery. Our current contracted services are around grounds maintenance and cleaning services.

The following duties are some of the areas carried out by these contracted services in the areas owned by CVCH:

- ✂ Cut the grass between March and November
- ✂ Removing any litter prior to any cutting
- ✂ Trim all grassed areas to a straight edge
- ✂ Treat all weeds
- ✂ Vacuum carpets and remove stains and spillages
- ✂ Clean floors, walls, windows and window frames
- ✂ Spot clean where required such as cob webs and minor graffiti



CV Cleaners



Fly Tipping

In 2016/17 CVCH collected fly tipping off the estate daily. Fly tipping is where items of rubbish are illegally deposited in public areas.

We will always promote disposing of household items correctly, not only is it illegal to fly tip but it also puts members of the public in harms way.

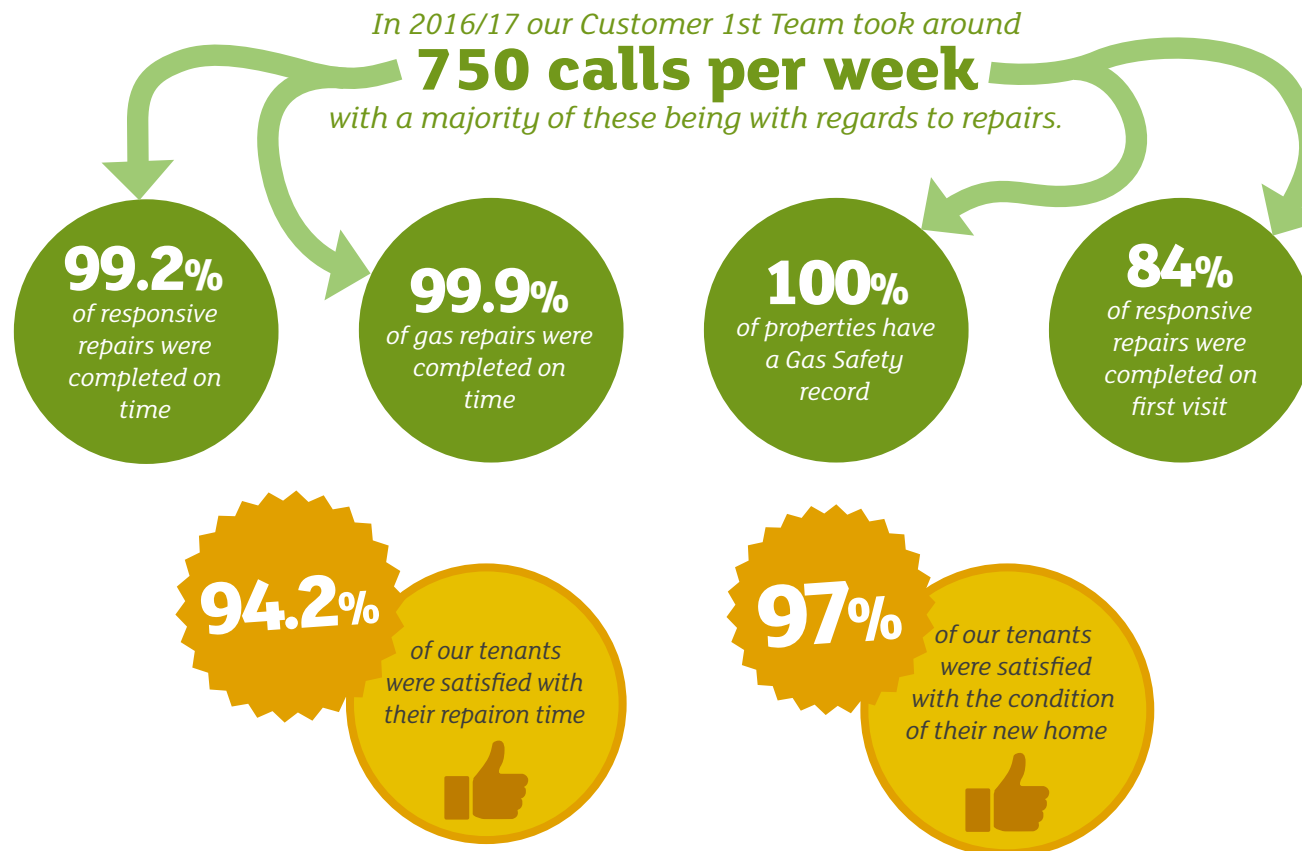
If you do see any fly tipping please contact our Customer 1st Team on **0121 748 8100**

Next Steps

We are really proud of the area we work in. We want Castle Vale to be the best neighbourhood in Birmingham with regards to the environment. We want all of the Castle Vale community help get us there. We are working on some exciting new projects for 17/18 so **watch this space!**

Repairs, maintenance and voids

A key part of what we do is ensure that your home is maintained and well cared for. Another element to this service is what we do when a tenant leaves a property - ensuring we are able to undertake works and move a new tenant in as quickly as possible to a home that meets a high standard.



After 11 years of working with Wates/G Purchase, The Pioneer Group has taken the decision to move this repairs, maintenance and voids service in a new direction when the current contract comes to an end in January 2018.

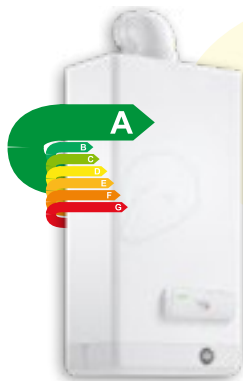
This important decision was taken following a recent cost evaluation exercise by the Group and is supported by WLSL colleagues.

We are at an exciting time and we thank all of the residents who have supported us through the redesign of the new contract and process. Keep your eyes peeled on our website ready for the announcement of who we will be working with from January 2018!

www.pioneergroup.org.uk

Major works and planned maintenance

As an organisation CVCH has continued to provide our tenants with a high quality home. We see maintaining our stock as one of our priorities even when the external environment may be tough financially. Below outlines our achievements in 2016/17 financial year and the plans ahead with high cost products and maintenance.



We installed **37 A-rated boilers** in 2016/17

We managed to achieve a high number of installs during the previous year so this year was all about replacing any that were reaching their 15 year life. We pride ourselves on the products we have installed which not only should ensure that there is energy efficiency in your home but we are also thinking about our environment.

100% of our tenants who had a new boiler in 2016/17 were satisfied!

LED lighting was fitted in **83 communal blocks**

completed in the year this was the second and final year of a two year contract to install LED lighting to improve fitments, lighting levels and reduced energy costs.



All **windows were replaced** at our older persons scheme Phoenix Court.

Door entry systems for **31 blocks** replaced with newer and more reliable systems.

In 2016/17 **we replaced 283 kitchens!**

We have continued with our kitchen replacement programme in 2017/18. We also fully replaced the communal kitchen at Chivenor house.

92% of our tenants who had a kitchen fitted in 2016/17 were satisfied!

The future

There is a lot of exciting things happening in the world of major works and planned maintenance within Castle Vale. We are committed to the continuation of investing in our homes to ensuring we sustain high quality but also ensure that our tenants are getting the most out of their money.

We have completed a 30 year plan of where our money will be invested based on a survey of our homes that was conducted in 2016/17. We will be consulting with our tenants with regards to this plan to ensure that it meets the needs of our customers. If you are interested in getting your voice heard please contact Becki Winkless on 0121 748 8134.

As we are all aware there is a major focus on energy efficiency which is not only important for us as a landlord but for you as our tenants. We want to ensure that there is a focus on improving your home and the environment around you. We want to have the best offering and ensure we are contributing to the green agenda which is high priority for us as well as across Birmingham. We will let you know later in 2018 what our plans are for improving the energy efficiency of our homes!

Compliments and complaints

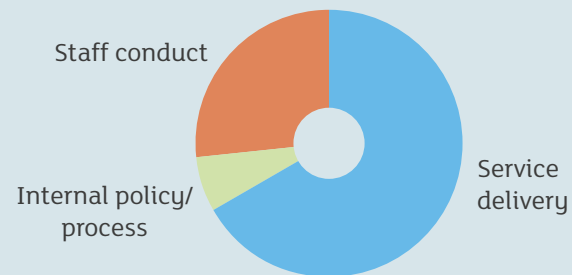
As an organisation we understand the importance of hearing the views of our customers — we actually see this as a vital element of what we do. We understand that hearing about how to could do better is just as important as hearing what we have done well and the positive impact we have made. Below will give a summary of the complaints we have received, what improvements we have made in response to these and also the great things that our tenants and residents have said to us! If you do want to get in touch to give us feedback please contact our Customer 1st Team on 0121 748 8100.

Complaints

In 2016/17 we received **71** complaints. Of these complaints and after a full investigation we...

Fully agreed with you on **25** of them and we partially agreed with you on another **13**. We didn't uphold **33** of your complaints however we still appreciated the feedback you provided on these matters.

The feedback that you gave us covered a number of areas. We keep a log of all complaints, the responsible area and what the complaint is about as this helps us shape our plans for the following year. Our community is at the heart of what we do and therefore this form of feedback is vital for us.



When we investigate complaints we always try and learn to ensure it is avoided in the future. Some of the learnings we captured from 2016/17 were:

- 🔗 **We needed to communicate more effectively**
- 🔗 **We needed to feed back to our contractor and insist on improvement**
- 🔗 **We needed to review our process**
- 🔗 **Internal training required**

Compliments

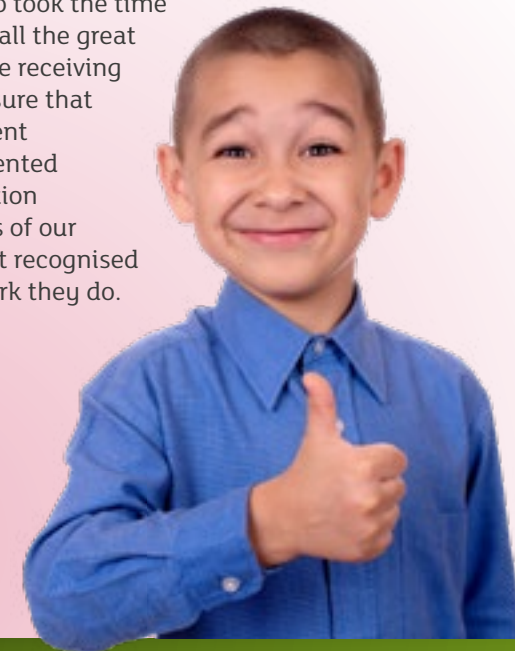
In 2016/17 we received a wonderful

51
compliments!



Thank you

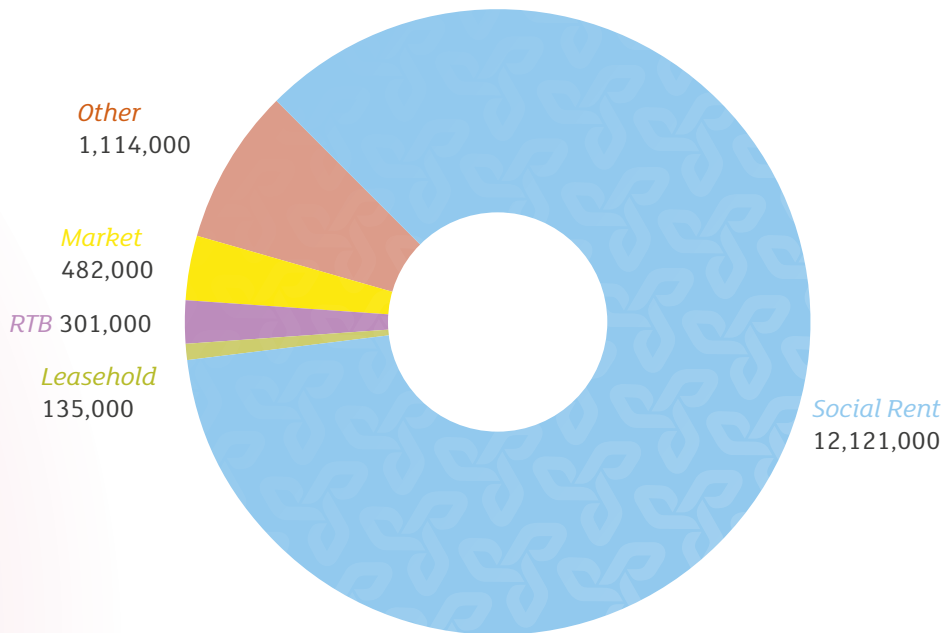
to everyone who took the time to tell us about all the great services they are receiving from us! We ensure that every compliment received is presented to the organisation so the members of our organisation get recognised for the great work they do.



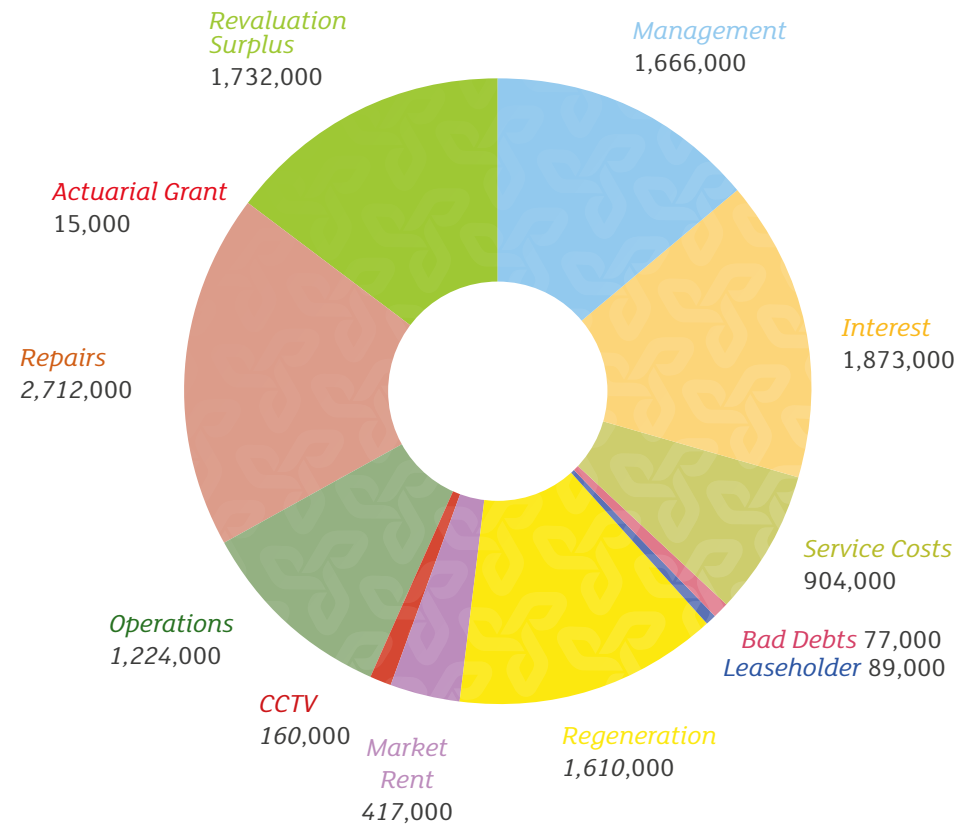
Income spending – Total Group

In 2015 the Pioneer Group was formed. Castle Vale Community Housing is still and always will be at the centre of this Group. We will continue to offer affordable housing solutions which meet the needs of our community. We are proud to be a community-led housing provider and will continue to be this in the years ahead.

Income



Expenditure



CVCH being part of a group enhances our offering and enables us to meet the needs of those in Castle Vale.



Our Partnerships

We (CVCH) pride ourselves on the great services we offer as a landlord. We also recognise that in order for us to ensure that the needs of our customers are met we also need to work with other experts.



Spitfire Services

(Based at Spitfire House, High Street, Castle Vale)

Castle Vale Community Housing contract Spitfire Services to offer tenants support with regards to personal finances. The following services are offered:

- **Free, confidential and impartial advice.**
- **Benefit health checks to ensure correct entitlement is being claimed.**
- **Support with benefit claims.**
- **A drop in for support when in financial crisis.**

We have committed to continue to invest in this service for our customers. For more information please visit www.spitfireservices.org.uk or call **0121 747 5932**.



Compass Support at the Sanctuary

Compass Support (also part of The Pioneer Group) offer a number of services in Castle Vale.

- ✦ Enable young people to reach their true potential.
- ✦ Support people to improve their health and wellbeing.
- ✦ Provide support for families, vulnerable groups and older people.
- ✦ Provide opportunities for people to increase skills and employability.

If you are interested in any of these services or just want to understand what we do please contact Customer 1st on **0121 748 8100**.



Inclusion & Insight 2016/2017

During 2016/2017 we organised events for the community and worked with partners, contractors, community groups and members of the community to ensure these events were planned, promoted and a success.

Leaseholder Afternoon Tea

We discovered leaseholders were a hard to reach group as many of them owned property but didn't live on the estate or were very isolated from CVCH as they didn't see themselves as tenants and were unsure how they could get involved.

We worked with the Leasehold Community Co-ordinator to set up an Afternoon Tea and invited all leaseholders to attend; the first one as a trail was well attended and we got some great feedback. We decided to run this every quarter with no agenda as that's what the residents requested and numbers grow every quarter, more and more want to get involved and understand how they are a part of the community and give us some great feedback and ideas.



Volunteer & Job Fair

Unemployment is quite high on Castle Vale and many people access support from Compass Support Employment Team; feedback from these residents was that Job Fairs were off the estate and they couldn't get to them so working in partnership with Compass, local employers, contractors and voluntary organisations we worked together to bring a Volunteer & Job Fair to Castle Vale. The day was a huge success with over 150 residents coming through the doors to find out what local opportunities were available to them with over 20 residents signing up to become volunteers and other signing up to college and other skills courses.

Ian Williams DIY Event

One of the local contractor who CVCH work with wanted to share skills with residents to help them improve their homes and learn new skills; they attended The Sanctuary and set up a painting workshop which gave residents to get the chance to learn from the experts, get some free painting equipment and also meet the contractors; they day was great with residents young and old getting involved in painting the computer suite in the building!



Social Snappers

Following feedback from residents on activities to relieve social isolation on Castle Vale we arranged for a local photographer to come for 6 weeks and teach our residents the art of photography! 12 residents packed into the Digital Hub at Topcliffe House and learnt some great new skills, bonded as a group of friends with likeminded interests and produced some great artwork. After the 6 week programme the group decided they didn't want to stop; they formed a resident led group; set up a facebook page; booked themselves on free community courses and held a public exhibition. Their work was spotted by local Dr's from Eden Court Surgery and it is now on display in the new building!



Rio on the Vale

A day for the whole family....this was our Summer Event for the whole of the estate to come together and have fun; this was certainly achieved.

We worked with local partners and community groups to provide entertainment such as singing, dancing, face painting, arts & crafts, sports and fun and games, local contractors provided prizes for our huge raffle including a 32" TV and local organisations came together to promote the great work they do on Castle Vale and showing resident how they can be supported to reach their true potential; a free BBQ was going throughout the day and everyone had a great time!

Party in the Park

RIO ON THE VALE!

Friday 5th August

Centre Park 12pm-4pm

FREE BBQ

5-A-SIDE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

PERFORMANCES & ENTERTAINMENT!

THINK SAFETY

COMMUNITY SAFETY

A wide variety of activities to participate in.
EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

For more information please do not hesitate to contact Becki Bembridge on: 07956 007 696

Operating Structure



Pioneer Group enablers:

Corporate Services – provides finance, governance, business systems and human resources.

Asset Management & Development – strategic service for all the Group assets. Development of new homes, investment programmes and sustainability modelling, to ensure a solid economic and social return. Responsive & Planned maintenance. H&S and Environmental Sustainability.

Partnerships and Innovation – Delivery of SGOHT strategy and operation. Pioneer Places. Marketing and new innovations. Facilitate partnerships, community regeneration.

Pioneer group partners and brands

Compass Support – support, training and advice services around health and wellbeing, employment, family, children and young people, and independent living and community hubs.

Castle Vale Community Housing – a community-based housing with a resident majority board, managing 2,500 social housing homes in Castle Vale and working hard to make the neighbourhood a great place to live.

Stockland Green Opportunity Housing and Training – responding to the poor quality private rented market offering quality homes. Community anchor and delivers environmental and training.

Pioneer Places – provides new housing solutions including repurchase of homes, such as former Right to Buy properties, or empty homes. It offers a market rented solution with certainty around rent levels, length of tenancy and quality of service.

Merlin Venture – Tiggy Winkles community nurseries in Castle Vale, affordable childcare to help parents get into work.

Legal Status of structure

The Pioneer Group – is a Registered Provider registered with the Homes and Communities Agency. It is an exempt charity. It owns all of the housing assets of the group and holds all loans and other liabilities.

CVCH – is a trading name of the Pioneer Group to manage the social housing assets owned in Castle Vale. The work is overseen by an operational committee of the Group called Castle Vale Community Housing Board. It has a resident majority on the this Board and delegated authority to ensure services are delivered to Castle Vale residents.

Pioneer Places – is a trading name of the Pioneer Group for market rented homes, shared ownership and sales of the Groups Assets.

SGOHT – is a subsidiary of the Pioneer Group. It is a Community Interest Company.

Compass Support – is a subsidiary of the Pioneer Group.

Merlin Venture – is a subsidiary of the Pioneer Group.



11 High Street | Castle Vale | Birmingham B35 7PR

Tel: **0121 748 8100** Email: contactus@cvch.org.uk

www.cvch.org.uk