

David Eastgate Speech

Annual Meeting 8th July 2010 – Glaziers Hall

Good evening everybody and once again, welcome.

The past year has been a demanding but hugely rewarding time for all involved in the Hyde Group. Despite the challenging economic situation, we have continued to make a lasting difference to the lives of the people we provide housing and support services to.

We had two disappointing audit commission inspections during the year, at HydeMartlet and Hyde SE, but we reacted quickly to address the areas where we needed to improve our performance. We have already completed the improvement action plan for HydeMartlet and are working with residents to implement the action plan in Hyde SE.

Notwithstanding the issues identified in the Short Notice Inspections, we recently received our Regulatory Judgement from the Tenant Services Authority who gave us a very positive assessment of our governance and financial viability.

Furthermore, we were given an Aa2 rating by Moody's Investors Service, which means that those who provide investment to the Group can have confidence in us and help us to build more homes and deliver better services for our residents.

Two weeks ago Inside Housing listed us as one of the biggest developers in the housing sector. Yet it is the excellence of our developments, rather than the volume, that has been recognised throughout the last year.

- The Hillside Hub in Brent was chosen as the ‘Best Mixed Use Regeneration Development of the Year’ at the British Homes Awards last July
- In October, our Mottingham Retrofit house won the ‘Low Energy Social Housing Project of the Year’ at the Inside Housing Sustainable Housing Awards
- And in March this year, Bermondsey Spa in Southwark was voted the ‘Best New Place to Live’ by the judges of London Planning Awards

Awards are for show but what really matters is that the people living in the homes we build enjoy living in them and feel part of a secure, supportive community.

Residents of Packington Square told us that they loved their new homes, and really liked that the first homes, built entirely for social tenants, are alongside the Regent’s Canal.

Our newly built shared ownership schemes have helped residents in Bermondsey Spa to do something that they’d never be able – to own their own home.

And our redevelopment of the Foreshore Estate in Deptford has improved not only the homes and local environment, but the quality of life for residents.

Our developments go beyond just homes - we work with people to regenerate their communities to make them places where they want to live.

In Islington, we built a new youth centre on the Ringcross estate by converting disused garages to provide modern facilities for young people to socialise, develop skills and access information on a variety of issues.

In Lambeth we worked with residents to turn a space originally designated for housing to be retained for community use. We built a new ball court and playground for local residents which opened in July last year.

And in Brighton, Lewisham and Sutton we have revamped existing estate playgrounds to give children new play areas.

Through the Hydewide Residents' Voice, and the Hydewide Residents' Eye we enable residents to scrutinise the services that we provide, and ask them how we can improve. We've set up resident inspection teams, who test that our services meet our Service Promise.

Residents lead inspections of our estates, and are able to spot things that our staff might have otherwise overlooked. Last year, resident-led inspections took place in Brent, Hampshire, Islington, Cambridgeshire, Surrey and Sussex.

We're training more residents at the moment to make sure that next year our services in Lambeth, Lewisham and all our stock in the south east of England can be inspected by residents. In support of this we are also funding residents to do a recognised estate inspection course with the Chartered Institute of Housing.

To ensure that residents remain at the heart of what we do, we have appointed a Head of Resident Engagement, Julia Johnson, who reports directly to me. Julia is here and there are members of her new team here also. They have an information stall in the reception room and they will be happy to answer your questions. This fresh focus will energise the resident voice throughout the Group and ensure their wishes are met in improving all our services.

We know that we have got more improvements to make, and we are committed to using residents' knowledge and understanding of our services to make sure they receive a consistently excellent service from us.

But we're not just about building houses and providing services – we're committed to helping improve people's lives.

This year, we've helped many residents get back into work or training, and offered financial and debt advice to those who need it most.

And we help young residents through our Young Pride awards scheme. Last year, 313 young residents received awards of up to £200.

Last year was successful in many ways, but there is much more to do over the next 12 months.

The year ahead holds many uncertainties:

- A new government who are significantly reducing public spending and reforming the planning system;
- A likelihood of a third regulator in less than 2 years; and
- An ever increasing housing waiting list.

These things are likely to mean that housing associations are asked to do more for less. We'll have to:

- Think about new ways of delivering new homes which don't rely on public subsidy
- Provide additional support to resident's who may find their benefits falling, offering help and advice to make sure that they are getting all that they are entitled to
- Work closely with our residents to ensure the impact of the cuts in public services don't affect the quality of their lives, homes and communities

Above all we know that we need to be better at getting the basics right. We need to make sure that all of our residents are getting an excellent service, regardless of where they live. We know that there will be changes that will affect both staff and residents, but they are needed to make sure that we achieve what we have promised to do.

Before I finish, I would just like thank you all for coming here today and celebrating what has been a successful year for the Hyde Group. Without our partners that are here tonight, many of the things I have mentioned would simply not be possible.

Finally, I'd like to thank our residents, some of whom are here tonight, for their rigorous scrutiny of the organisation. Your continuing involvement helps us to get things right.