

MERLIN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

**Co-operative and Community Benefit Society
Registration Number 30012R**

**Regulator of Social Housing
Registration Number L4485**

Bromford.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 March 2024

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Merlin Housing Society Limited

Board Members as at 31 March 2024:

The board members who served from 1 April 2023 up to the date of approval of these financial statements were as follows:

	Position	Meetings attended 2023/24
Steve Dando	Independent Non-Executive Director Chair	10/10
Richard Bird	Independent Non-Executive Director	10/10
Dame Sandra Horley	Independent Non-Executive Director	10/10
Charles Hutton-Potts	Independent Non-Executive Director	10/10
Neil Rimmer	Independent Non-Executive Director	10/10
Jerry Toher	Independent Non-Executive Director	9/10
Robert Nettleton	Chief Executive	10/10
Paul Walsh	Chief Finance Officer	10/10

Company Secretary
Sarah Beal

Advisors:

External Auditors:

Beever and Struthers
The Colmore Building
20 Colmore Circus
Queensway,
Birmingham, B4 6AT

Business Assurance Provider:

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
2 Glass Wharf
Bristol BS2 0FR

Bankers:

Lloyds Bank plc
25 Gresham Street
London
EC2V7HN

Taxation Advisor:

Deloitte LLP
Four Brindley Place,
Birmingham,
B1 2HZ

Registered office:

Shannon Way
Ashchurch
Tewkesbury
GL20 8ND

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

The board of Merlin Housing Society Limited ('MHS') is pleased to present its annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Who are we and what do we do?

MHS is a subsidiary of Bromford Housing Group Limited ('BHG'). MHS is a registered provider of social housing and a registered Association under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Together, BHG and its subsidiaries are known as 'Bromford'.

Bromford exists to provide affordable homes for people who can't access market housing. We believe in providing safe, secure and warm homes, but we're ultimately a people business. Not only do we care about what happens to people that live in a Bromford home, we want people to thrive.

That's why our purpose is simple and honest. ***We invest in homes and relationships so people can thrive.***

Bromford is a housing group – one that owns over 47,000 homes, has individual relationships with more than 112,000 customers and has a very strong balance sheet. All this is only possible because of the 1,900 people who work for the organisation.

MHS's principal activities are the ownership and management of rental and shared ownership properties and the development of new properties for sale and rent.

Our board – who are they and what do they do?

BHG is the parent company of MHS. Under Bromford's Governance Framework, MHS delegates matters of governance and financial authority to the BHG board (The board).

The board is responsible for ensuring that Bromford continues to deliver real value and that the business remains on a long term, sustainable footing. In practice this means discussing, taking decisions on and measuring performance against the aims laid out in the Bromford strategy.

Setting out our purpose and strategy over a four-year period, the Bromford strategy is the focal point for the board's activity and discussion as well as a longer term business plan which is regularly stress tested over a 30-year period. The board considers a variety of scenarios in the macroenvironment to provide challenge to specific business assumptions and flexing the strategy where appropriate. Bromford's day-to-day leadership is delegated to the Chief Executive.

Bromford's statement of strategy (published on our website) describes our 'DNA' (Fig. 1). Our DNA is what we stand for and the behaviours, qualities and values that represent what it means to Be Bromford.



Fig. 1. Bromford DNA

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

Board composition, meetings, decisions and delegations

The board operates as a unitary board.

From the 1 April 2023, our board comprised eight members – two Executive Directors (our Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer) and six Non-Executive Directors (NEDs).

NEDs are recruited for their skills and experience and are appointed for an initial term of three years. Reappointment following the initial term is not automatic and NEDs are required to satisfy continuing independence and performance-related criteria before they are appointed for a second, three-year term. Any term beyond six years is subject to rigorous annual review which takes into account the need to progressively refresh the board. NEDs are offered ongoing training, support and access to independent professional advice to enhance their decision-making and help them discharge their duties effectively.

The time commitment required from NEDs is currently between 12 and 15 days per annum. The other significant commitments of the Chair, Steve Dando and NEDs were disclosed to the BHG board before appointment and are summarised in the BHG Annual Report and Accounts.

Board effectiveness

All board members are expected to contribute to a culture of clear and open debate. This is to promote informed and prudent decision making and members are expected to keep developing and refreshing their knowledge and skills so they can continue to make positive contributions to board discussions.

Each year the board carries out a formal evaluation of board, committee and individual director performance. At least every three years, as recommended by the code, this evaluation is facilitated by an external advisor to provide an independent perspective. During 2023/24 there was an independent review of board effectiveness which was carried out by Campbell Tickell. The board and remuneration committee have been working through the actions. No material matters of concern were identified.

Board and Committee Decision-making

BHG operates a group structure with coterminous boards across the four main entities – the parent – BHG and the main operating subsidiaries Bromford Housing Association (BHA), Bromford Home Ownership (BHO) and Merlin Housing Society (MHS). The membership of all entities is the same except for BHO where two members, Neil Rimmer and Charles Hutton-Potts are not members. This is in line with our Group Conflicts of Interest Policy and protects the charitable interests of BHG, BHA and MHS. All members of the board, executive and non-executive make decisions by working together and achieving a general consensus.

To retain control of key decisions and to provide a clear division of responsibility between the running of the board and the running of the business, the board and the other registered providers in the Group, have identified 'reserved matters' that only those boards can approve.

Other matters have been delegated to the committees by the boards. Any matters outside of these delegations fall within the chief executive's responsibility and authority.

The board and each committee receive sufficient, reliable and timely information in advance of meetings and are provided with or are given access to all the necessary resources and expertise to enable them to undertake their duties in an effective manner.

The board met 10 times in the year. We held our annual strategy setting event in November.

Each board meeting has a planned agenda, which allows enough time to discuss both strategic and operational matters and includes consideration of performance and risk management.

Each board committee meets as many times as necessary to discharge their duties and responsibilities under their terms of reference. For reports from our committees, refer to the BHG Annual Report and Accounts.

The board and committees can seek advice to support them in their decision making.

Value for Money

Ensuring Value for Money for our customers and our Group is ingrained in our culture and enables us to deliver our Strategy and to enable customers to thrive. Our value for money statement is published within our Group Annual Report and Accounts.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

Statement of compliance with the regulatory standards

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), publishes a regulatory framework and regulatory standards which comprise the economic standards and consumer standards. Our self assessments carried out at the end of the 2023/24 financial year were against the standards which were effective during that year. The RSH has introduced new consumer standards from 1 April 2024 which will be reported on in our next annual report.

One of the core economic standards is the governance and financial viability standard. This requires Registered Providers (RPs) to have effective governance arrangements in place that deliver their aims, objectives and intended outcomes for tenants and potential tenants in an effective, transparent and accountable manner. It also requires RPs to manage their resources effectively, to make sure their viability is maintained while ensuring that social housing assets are not put at undue risk. As part of being regulated by the RSH, Bromford is given a rating for governance, as assessed against the governance and financial viability standard.

Following an In-Depth Assessment carried out by the RSH in 2022, Bromford maintains a G1 governance and V1 financial viability rating, the highest ratings on the scale throughout the financial year ended 31 March 2024. Positive feedback by the regulator was focused on customers, board engagement and strategic drive along with landlord compliance and health and safety. We have already implemented measures to respond to the two areas of focus identified by the Regulator at our last IDA in 2022. We have implemented an assurance map that provides the board with a picture of assurance across Bromford and have introduced a new executive governance group to oversee our regulatory returns processes. No further areas were identified in our annual engagement meeting in 2023.

The board is committed to ensuring that we comply with our legal and regulatory responsibilities, including the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Bromford's modern slavery statement is available on the website.

Each year the RSH requires RPs to assess their compliance with the governance and financial viability standard and provide assurance to customers and stakeholders that the RSH specific expectations are being complied with.

We undertake an annual review of compliance. The board is assured that Bromford is compliant with the regulatory framework including the governance and financial viability standard and its accompanying code of practice.

Statement of compliance with our code of governance

The Bromford Housing Group has voluntarily adopted the UK Corporate Governance Code 2018 (the code). The code reflects our commercial outlook, focus on achieving the highest possible standards of accountability and transparency and our desire to position ourselves alongside other high-achieving organisations, regardless of sector.

Merlin Housing Society does have legacy shareholders and continues to hold an annual general meeting. The UK code applies for our financial year 2023 to 2024.

Each year the board reviews compliance with the UK code and during the financial year ended 31 March 2024, we consider that Bromford has complied with all relevant principles and provisions of the UK Corporate Governance Code 2018. We consider the annual report and accounts, taken as a whole, are fair, balanced and understandable and provide the information necessary for stakeholders to assess the Group's position, performance, business model and strategy.

Risk management and internal control

Risk Overview

Bromford has a risk management process in place through which our principal risks and related controls are identified, assessed and managed. Our board has overall responsibility for setting our risk appetite and ensuring there is an effective risk management process in place. Applying the principles of risk management effectively allows Bromford to create value by enabling us to take informed decisions while protecting value by reducing the uncertainty of achieving our strategy.

We operate a five-step risk management process. These steps are designed to identify problems before they occur, so that risk management activity may be planned and invoked as needed to mitigate impacts on achieving our strategy.

We think of risk as those things that could prevent us from achieving our strategic goals. Our approach to risk management is designed to enable the business to deliver its strategic goals while managing the inherent uncertainty

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

that can manifest itself as both opportunities and threats to these outcomes. The board defines clear statements and tolerances that set out the type and amount of risk we are prepared to assume as we deliver our strategy. Regular reporting to board highlights any movement in the assessment of key risks.

How we manage our risks?

Bromford operates a three lines assurance model, targeted at areas of greatest risk. Using a risk-based approach provides an effective programme of assurance which considers areas that we know are high risk. This approach ensures clear separation between risk and control ownership (first line), oversight, support and challenge (second line) and audit (third line). We regularly reassess our assurance activity as risk is reduced in certain areas and increased where new risks are emerging, resulting in a proportionate assurance application.

Internal audit provide independent, objective assurance to management and the board over the effectiveness of first and second lines and is independent of our executive management. This includes an agreed programme of reviews which highlight any areas where risks are not being managed within our appetite or where we may need to re-calibrate our appetite in the context of internal and external changes.

Additional assurance is provided from external sources, such as external audit, technical specialists and regulatory checks.

Risk appetite

A full end to end risk appetite review was undertaken by the board In November 2022 to align with the new Bromford Strategy 2023-2027 to ensure that the risk appetite statements, metrics and tolerances remain fit for purpose and underpin the core elements of our strategy. New sustainability and customer statements have been added and the operational and strategic statements removed as a result of the review. The changes are reflective of the customer centric approach to our services delivery and our ongoing commitment to sustainable business practices. The risk appetite was reviewed again in 2023 to ensure it remained fit for purpose.

Across five key enterprise risk types it sets out the type and amount of risk we are prepared to accept as we deliver our strategy, plans and run our day-to-day operations. These are integral to our corporate decision making.

No business is free of risk and to deliver our strategy we often need to take risk. We only take risk that is in line with our risk appetite, our purpose, our DNA and our strategy. Risk we accept must be clearly understood and regularly reviewed and managed effectively. We measure, monitor and report our exposures within agreed tolerances, with forward looking risk indicators and triggers in place. In some areas we have risks for which we have little or no appetite however the nature of these risks mean they cannot be eliminated completely.

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**Board and Strategic Report
For the year end 31 March 2024**

	Averse	Minimal	Balanced	Open	Embracing
<p>Legal and regulatory</p> <p>Our appetite is minimal, as we will do everything that is reasonably practical to ensure compliance and is averse with respect to landlord asset compliance and health and safety risks, meaning we do everything we can to ensure compliance with landlord obligations.</p>	←→				
<p>Customer</p> <p>Our appetite is generally minimal as we will not compromise on the provision of warm, safe and secure homes. We are open on the provision of our services to enable innovative solutions to meet our current and future customer needs.</p>		←→			
<p>Sustainability</p> <p>Our appetite is open, as we will explore inventive options for delivering our strategy to provide new and existing services for customers. We will encourage a culture of innovation for colleagues, in a sustainable way, that both protects and enhances our reputation.</p>				←→	
<p>Financial</p> <p>Our appetite is balanced, as we will not accept risks which threaten our financial viability, but we will be open to diverse investment options and innovative arrangements to achieve our strategy, however we will not accept risks which materially threaten our financial viability.</p>			←→		
<p>Development/commercial</p> <p>Our appetite is open as we seek to remain competitive in the marketplace while proactively seeking new opportunities for sustainable growth both in the short and longer term.</p>				←→	

Our principal risks

The board reviews the principal risks, appetite and tolerances annually and the last review was in November 2023. The risks and associated indicators are monitored monthly by the board. Business risks are monitored for emerging threats and operational trends, with escalation through executive forums, audit and risk committee and then to board.

The list of principal risks does not comprise all of the risks Bromford faces and they are not presented in order of importance. The nature of the risk means the landscape can alter and we ensure our regular updates to the risks reflect this.

**Board and Strategic Report
For the year end 31 March 2024**

Below we set out the profile of risks for Bromford, which are aligned to one or more of the strategic objectives:

Place-based working 1	Relationships that support customer aspiration 2	Our move to scale 3	Closing the home standard gap 4
Move to proactive maintenance 5	Agile working to solve problems 6	Place-based pipeline of talent 7	Known as a leader and influencer 8

Death, injury or harm	Direction of travel: static	Link to strategy: 2,4,5
Risk: Our approach to health and safety lacks robust controls and oversight. This results in death, injury or harm caused to colleagues, customers, contractors or the public.		
Risk mitigations	Changes in year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a well-established health and safety policy and framework sets out no one should be harmed by what we do • audit and risk committee and board receive independent assurance from technical experts throughout the year • monitoring of our supply chain to ensure safe practice • safety Hub, our dedicated health and safety software allows real time recording of incidents and near misses to allow prompt review and analysis external health and safety provider for our construction subsidiary (BDL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health and safety policy reviewed and approved by board • health and safety system re-procurement completed • terms of reference for the fire safety group has been updated to be more inclusive of general building safety 	
Safeguarding customers and protecting colleague welfare	Direction of travel: static	Link to strategy: 2
Risk: We fail to promote the safeguarding of customer and colleague welfare including responding to and identifying allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse in a timely manner.		
Risk mitigations	Changes in year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domestic abuse policy and procedure in place • mandatory safeguarding training for front line colleagues • safeguarding leads and champions in place across all geographical regions • colleagues use personal safety devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new safeguarding annual report shared with customer forum and risk and compliance forum • senior leaders across the organisation received a safeguarding deep dive • as part of the internal audit a colleague survey was completed and 92% of respondents felt they would be well supported in raising any safeguarding concerns 	

Board and Strategic Report
For the year end 31 March 2024

Financial pressures for customers		Direction of travel: static	Link to strategy: 2,3
Risk: Uncertainty within the external environment leads to increased financial pressure for customers.			
Risk mitigations		Changes in year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> our coaching approach is designed to support our customers income management policies in place to support customers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> over 36,000 customer reviews completed which includes topics relating to financial wellbeing Money Matters website page updated to signpost money saving tips across a number of areas we achieved 99.9% decent homes and 89% of our homes are EPC C or above £60,000 HACT (Housing Associations Charitable Trust) fuel fund 23-24 secured for eligible customers income team have secured just under £1m in additional income since its inception in June 2022 	

Cyber security and network controls		Direction of travel: static	Link to strategy: 6
Risk: Failure of infosec controls in our network, applications, infrastructure or devices, results in severe detriment to Bromford or our customers.			
Risk mitigations		Changes in year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dedicated information security team, head of information security and data governance and data protection officer responsible for monitoring information security and cyber threat mandatory annual cyber security training for all colleagues all operational and office teams have business continuity and crisis management plans in place information security management systems aligned to ICO/EIC 27000 standards, with oversight through business forums and audit and risk committee reporting 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cyber security organisation wide road show completed vulnerability and physical penetration test completed data stewardship approach approved by executive team regular phishing tests completed, with eLearning refreshers completed where necessary artificial Intelligence user guideline published 	

Board and Strategic Report
For the year end 31 March 2024

Development and market sales		Direction of travel: static	Link to strategy: 3
Risk: Internal and external factors lead to a failure to deliver our new homes programme in line with our strategy.			
Risk mitigations		Changes in year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a dedicated forum considers opportunities against strategy to ensure compliance with business policy, tracks programme delivery and monitors the external market for potential impacts • land forum in place • minimum return rates approved by the board • board approval for developments that exceed a predetermined financial commitment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • despite a challenging operating environment we have delivered 1,191 affordable homes • record land deals in South Gloucester secured • regeneration MMC (modern methods of construction) homes in Moreton-in-Marsh completed delivering our most energy efficient homes to date 	

Financial planning and performance		Direction of travel: static	Link to strategy: 2,3,7
Risk: Our financial and resilience planning and/or monitoring fails to mitigate substantial macro-economic or political events.			
Risk mitigations		Changes in year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • robust financial planning, stress testing scenarios and resilience plans are in place, incorporating plausible macro-economic and political impacts, with close tracking at forum, committee and board level against the financial framework and golden rules 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frequent revision of the 30 year plan to understand the impacts of risks to our long term business model • ongoing assessment and monitoring of impact of inflation, interest rate changes and potential for rent caps • Moody's reaffirmed our credit rating as A2 • Standard & Poor's reaffirmed as A+ 	

People		Direction of travel: static	Link to strategy: All 8
Risk: Failure to lead, retain, recruit and engage colleagues with the right capabilities to deliver our strategy and purpose.			
Risk mitigations		Changes in year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance management including a talent matrix for our most senior leaders • continued investment in leadership capability and the accelerating talent programme for future talent • continued investment in apprenticeships and graduates • a clearly defined equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) road map developed by our Be.You group with champion groups embedded in the organisation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further reduction in gender pay gap to 3.8% (median) • disability confidence level 2 achieved • great places to work (GPTW) certified (72% +3%), Best Workplaces Super Large Organisations and Best Workplaces for Wellbeing, Best Workplaces for Women • improved inclusion score from our EDI survey to 80% (+2%) • Women in Housing Award Finalist for Female Career Accelerator programme and colleague finalist for Young Builder of the Year Award 	

**Board and Strategic Report
For the year end 31 March 2024**

Regulatory reporting	Direction of travel: improving	Link to strategy: 8
Risk: We provide delayed, unreliable or incorrect information to the regulator via regulatory returns leading to reputational damage or regulatory intervention		
Risk mitigations	Changes in year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> skilled colleagues to collate, review and challenge regulatory returns. We have an effective level of checks and balances of the data submitted to the regulator we use a leadership self-assessment, asking relevant senior leadership colleagues to complete a self-declaration each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> external assessment of tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) increased assurance across all three lines of assurance for critical regulatory returns new reporting and disclosure forum introduced to ensure robust arrangements are in place to produce and submit accurate and timely reporting of regulatory returns data governance template introduced to increase robustness of data source verification 	

Emerging risks

Emerging risks are upcoming events which present uncertainty but are difficult to assess at the current stage. We use techniques such as horizon scanning to identify and report these risks and emerging risk management ensures we are adequately prepared for the potential opportunities and threats they pose. Business units consider changing, new or emerging risks through regular review and discussion, we produce insight reports and these are shared through the governance channels to highlight new and growing threats. We closely monitor emerging risks that may, with time, become principal risks. We consider the following to be risks that have the potential to increase in significance and affect the performance of Bromford.

Title	Detail	Area	Time Horizon
Economic uncertainty and funding impact	Economic instability can lead to fluctuations in funding and financial insecurity. Economic downturns could reduce available capital and increase borrowing costs. In addition, uncertainties can impact grant availability and the ability of customers to pay rent.	Economic	Short term
Geopolitical tensions	Ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East could further increase commodity prices and could result in an economic slowdown.	Economic	Short-medium term
Political landscape	Over the last 12 months market confidence has stabilised. In addition we now have a new Labour government in place following the recent general election in July. We already know that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government is now Angela Rayner and a number of other ministerial roles have changed too. Political dynamics can profoundly influence the sector through shifts in housing policies, funding allocations and legislative priorities.	Political	Short term

One of the board’s key responsibilities is to make sure that Bromford has a system of internal controls in place that robustly manages the operational and strategic risks that threaten our business model, future performance, solvency and liquidity.

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Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

Internal control

The audit and risk committee (the committee) monitors and reviews the effectiveness of the internal control system, conducts an annual effectiveness review and reports the findings to the board. The system of internal control is designed to manage rather than eliminate risk, to prevent and/or detect fraud and to provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The board has reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control, including risk management, for the year to 31 March 2024 and up to the date of signing these financial statements. It has not identified any weaknesses sufficient to cause material misstatement or loss which require disclosure in the financial statements.

An internal control system can provide reasonable but not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss, as it is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve business objectives.

Internal audit

Internal audit is an independent assurance function which is available to the board, Audit and Risk Committee and all levels of management. The role of internal audit is to provide assurance that Bromford's risk management and internal control systems are well designed and operate effectively and that any corrective action is taken in a timely manner. In April 2023 we commenced our co-source arrangement for internal audit. The internal team is supported by our co-source partner PwC who provide access to specialist expertise to support the delivery of the audit plan. The co-source arrangement adds value through greater access to specific areas of expertise and increased ability to flex resources.

A three year strategic audit plan is created, from which the annual audit plan is developed for approval by the Audit and Risk Committee. The committee reviews and challenges the plan, specifically whether key risk areas are audited with sufficient frequency and depth. Regular reporting enables the committee to monitor delivery of the audit plan. Each audit is reported to the committee on the findings of the audit and any actions that have been agreed by management to address weaknesses identified. No material weaknesses were identified during the year, although a number of reports had significant findings that the management team are following up.

Significant issues considered by the audit and risk committee for the year ended 31 March 2024

Significant issues were discussed with management and the external auditor in February 2024 when the audit and risk committee reviewed the Audit Plan and Strategy for the year and at the conclusion of the audit when the financial statements were reviewed in July 2024.

The committee also considered all relevant reports and findings presented by the external auditor and also the adequacy of management's response. In addition, the committee reviewed the external auditor's independence, objectivity and effectiveness of the audit.

The audit plan and strategy for the year identified the key audit matters which are considered below.

Key audit matter	Committee response
Long term financial planning	The group has borrowings, which include undrawn facilities, predominantly revolving credit facilities. The group also has standalone interest rate swaps for periods up to 2031 to manage mark-to-market exposure. The loan covenant calculations as at 31 March 2024 show that the loan covenant position is compliant with funder requirements across the group. Following audit testing across a number of areas the external auditor found no issues of concern in this area. In line with Auditing Standards, the external auditor reviewed judgements and estimates until the point of signing the financial statements and reviewed the group's long term financial plans, which were revised in light of the current macroeconomic conditions. Management gave assurances that the group will remain a going concern and is able to avoid breaching its loan covenants even in a serious stressed scenario. The committee was satisfied with the outcomes of the audit and the work performed by management.

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Key judgements and estimates	The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities at the year-end and the amounts reported for revenues and expenses during the year. The external auditor undertook testing to assess whether the key judgements and estimates have been made appropriately and in line with expectations. The committee was satisfied with the outcomes of the audit which noted the results of the work proved satisfactory.
Housing properties	During the year the group capitalised £47.9m of improvement works. The external auditor undertook testing to evaluate and test the controls over the capitalisation of expenditure on major repairs and components, checked accruals made for maintenance expenditure incurred up to 31 March but not yet invoiced and reviewed recognition of grants received and grants allocated to completed schemes, including any amounts due back to the government which are to be included in liabilities. The committee was satisfied with the outcomes of the audit which noted no issues of concern and that housing properties are fairly stated and correctly disclosed.
Development and sales	During the year new developments are capitalised by the group. The group delivered 1,201 new homes during 2023/24. The external auditor tested a number of areas including the key controls over the approval and recording of development expenditure and disposals, including development appraisal assumptions and assessed the accounting policies for capitalising development overheads and interest on loans. The committee was satisfied with the outcomes of the audit which noted no issues of concern.
Defined benefit and pension schemes	Bromford participates in the Avon pension fund (LGPS) and the Bromford pension scheme. The external auditor reviewed the pension schemes information provided by the actuaries to the group and considered the disclosure implications, the actuarial valuations and assumptions to ensure consistency with 2022/23 and the accuracy of the journals processed at year-end. The external auditor noted the financial statements show balances and disclosures in line with the actuarial reports. The external auditor compared the asset split for the group's share of the scheme assets against the total asset split of the pension schemes and found no significant variances. The committee was satisfied with the outcomes of the audit and the appropriate assumptions were within a reasonable range.
Recoverability of long-term debtor	As at 31 March 2024, Bromford Housing Group Limited had a long-term debtor balance of £867m due from group companies due to the on-lending of finance received from borrowings. The external auditor tested a number of areas including a review of the forecast results to identify whether there are any indications that BHG subsidiaries will not be able to repay the intercompany loan, a review of the directors' going concern assessment of BHG subsidiaries and a review of the disclosures of the long-term debtor in BHG's accounts and the associated creditor in the BHG's subsidiaries' accounts. The external auditor found that the assumptions used in the business plans were reasonable and in line with actual performance. The committee was satisfied with the outcomes of the audit which noted no issues with performance or going concern for any entities in the group.

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Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

In addition to fulfilling its key responsibilities the committee reviewed the following topics:

Area of focus	Committee action
Internal audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewed and approved the internal audit charter for adoption • considered internal audit reports presented to the committee and satisfied itself that management had resolved or was in the process of resolving outstanding actions • reviewed and approved the internal audit plan for 2024 to 2025 • reviewed and approved the second line assurance plan • reviewed the second line assurance reports and had oversight of the closure of third line material actions
External audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewed the proposed audit plan for the 2023 to 2024 audit, including the key audit risks, audit report from Beever and Struthers on the financial statements and the areas of particular focus for the 2023 to 2024 audit • assessed the effectiveness of the external auditor and agreed the reappointment of Beever and Struthers as the external auditor • agreed audit fees for the year ended 31 March 2024 • reviewed the financial statements and external financial reporting
Financial and regulatory reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewed and discussed the financial statements, considered the accounting judgements and policies applied and assessed the findings of the statutory audit in respect of the integrity of the financial reporting of full and half year results • reviewed the 2022 to 2023 annual report and accounts and provided a recommendation to the board that as a whole they complied with the 2018 Code to be fair, balanced and understandable • approved Bromford market trading updates
Internal controls and risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewed the Risk Appetite Framework and approved the new risk appetite statement • received five chief risk officer reports and quarterly key strategic risk reports • received regular updates in relation to the governance and risk management in the transformation programme • received updates throughout the year on the outcomes of penetration and vulnerability testing • received regular updates in relation to landlord compliance performance • monitored fraud reporting including a review of the adequacy of the whistleblowing processes and procedures, approving revisions to the whistleblowing policy

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Financial review (5-year summary)

Income and Expenditure £'000s	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Turnover	74,119	72,852	71,168	76,508	82,290
Operating costs and cost of sales	(50,198)	(43,795)	(39,526)	(41,200)	(55,235)
Surplus on disposal of assets	4,588	1,857	5,140	5,497	4,981
Change in valuation of investment properties	713	529	1,265	35	(65)
Operating surplus	29,222	31,443	38,047	40,840	31,971
Net interest charge and other finance costs and fair value adjustments	(9,211)	(9,910)	(9,935)	(8,750)	(5,510)
Surplus for the year after taxation	20,011	21,533	28,112	32,090	26,461

Statement of Financial Position £'000s	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Housing properties at cost less depreciation	448,781	464,577	483,465	518,560	581,476
Other tangible fixed assets, intangible fixed assets, investments and long-term debtors	18,999	20,570	22,606	10,136	9,669
Net current assets/(liabilities)	48,091	53,252	60,443	(14,964)	(100,733)
Total assets less current liabilities	515,871	538,399	566,514	513,732	490,412
Loans due after one year	(163,232)	(162,979)	(162,612)	(162,237)	(161,843)
Unamortised grant	(11,176)	(11,411)	(11,185)	(11,141)	(18,796)
Other long term liabilities and provisions	(156,789)	(156,260)	(149,061)	(60,469)	(9,739)
Total net assets	184,674	207,749	243,656	279,885	300,034
Total reserves	184,674	207,749	243,656	279,885	300,034

Income and expenditure

The surplus for the financial year was £26.5m (2023: £32.1m). The majority of income 93.7% (2023: 91.5%) is derived from rents and service charges and we are not dependent upon income from asset disposals.

Shared Ownership

Shared ownership sales income for the year was £4.8m (2023: £5.1m). We sold 35 homes at an average 100% sales value of £312k (2023: 40 homes, 100% value: £326k). The average first tranche share sold increased to 44% (2023: 39%).

Costs

Over the last year we have seen an increase of £13.2m (35%) in our total operating costs per the Statement of Comprehensive Income from £38.0m in the previous year to £51.2m this year. This is in part driven by cost of living and inflation increases. Colleague costs have increased reflecting our pay award made at the start of the year. We have seen higher than expected repair volumes as well as additional costs to address instances of condensation, damp and mould in our homes. We have also reviewed the basis of recharges between group companies and have changed the basis of the recharge to one which is more in line with operational activity. This has impacted our social housing letting operating margin which has reduced to 34% (2023: 49%) and overall operating margin before asset sales which has reduced to 33% (2023: 46%) although both of these metrics remain strong.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

Disposals

Disposal profits in the year were £5.0m (2023: £5.5m). We continued to dispose of void and non core properties. The profit recognised on the disposal of these properties was £3.8m and £0.7m respectively. On 1st April 2023 Gloucester Rural Housing Association merged with English Rural Housing Association, consequently the 157 homes we managed on their behalf were transferred on this date.

Balance sheet

Fixed assets

Details of the movements in fixed assets during the year are set out in notes 11, 14 and 15 to the financial statements.

Investment in our homes

This year we invested £25.5m in major repair and refurbishment programmes (2023: £21.2m) and £54.9m in new homes (2023: £30.5m).

Treasury

Treasury activity is undertaken at Group level. However, Merlin continues to have specific entity related loans and covenants. The following table highlights the position for key measures for Merlin.

	2024	2023
Borrowing	£165m	£221m
Undrawn facilities	£nil	£190m
Cash and cash equivalents	£2.8m	£27.1m
Fixed rate borrowing	100%	100%
Cost of borrowing	3.4%	3.4%
Interest cover covenant	3.3 times	3.8 times

Cash and liquidity

Cash balances are invested at Group level with Merlin holding £2.8m (2023: £27.1m) at year-end. The decrease is due to the repayment of Group loans in the year.

Facilities and funding

External loans are £162m (2023: £162m). Facilities have remained stable over the year. Intra-group on-lending has decreased to £3m (2023: £59m) due to repayment of loans in the year.

Undrawn facilities are revolving credit facilities (RCFs) which provide flexibility and assist in mitigating the cost of carry on excess funds. Over the year £190m of RCFs with Lloyds expired and were refinanced in Bromford Housing Group. At the year-end, there were no undrawn RCFs in Merlin (2023: £190m).

We use fixed rate borrowings to manage our exposure to increases in interest rates and 100% of our drawn borrowings are at fixed rates (2023: 100%) to lock in low interest rates. The average cost of borrowing is 3.4% (2023: 3.4%). This has remained unchanged from the prior year.

Covenants

We have considerable capacity on both our interest cover and asset gearing covenants and they do not limit our activities.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

2. Operating performance

Operational performance against targets is monitored at Group level and a summary is included within the Annual Report and Accounts of BHG – which are available on the Bromford website www.bromford.co.uk.

3. Value for money (VfM)

Details of Bromford's VfM performance are summarised in the Annual Report and Accounts of BHG – which are available on the Bromford website www.bromford.co.uk. The Regulator for Social Housing metrics for Merlin as a stand alone entity are shown below.

Sector metrics

Ref	Metric Name	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Reinvestment %	8.1%	5.2%	4.7%	8.9%	11.5%
2A	New supply delivered (Social housing units) %	2.5%	1.7%	0.9%	1.6%	1.7%
2B	New supply delivered (Non-social housing units) %	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3	Gearing %	52%	47%	40%	33%	24%
4	EBITDA MRI	212%	267%	233%	322%	278%
5	Headline Social housing cost per unit (£000s)	3.53	3.08	3.45	3.32	4.53
6A	Operating Margin (social housing lettings) %	34%	43%	48%	49%	34%
6B	Operating Margin (overall) %	33%	34%	46%	46%	33%
7	ROCE	5.7%	5.8%	6.7%	7.9%	6.5%

Operating margins at 34% for social housing lettings (2023: 49%) and 33% overall (2023: 46%) remain strong, although have reduced compared to last year due to cost of living and inflation increases as well as the increase in operating costs due to a change in the basis of recharges from other group companies. EBITDA MRI has also reduced from 322% to 278% due to reasons noted above.

Reinvestment has continued to increase with the development of new homes and investment in existing homes. This has also been a factor of new supply delivered increasing from 1.6% to 1.7%. Gearing decreased from 33% to 25% and driven by the repayment of intra group loans in the year.

Public benefit entity

As a public benefit entity, MHS has applied public benefit entity 'PBE' prefixed paragraphs of FRS102.

Statement of Compliance with the 2018 Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)

The board confirms that the Strategic Report contained within this Board Report has been prepared in accordance with the principles set out in Para 4.7 of the 2018 SORP for registered social housing providers.

Statement of board's responsibilities in respect of the Annual Report and the financial statements

The board is responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the Association financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 requires the board to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under those regulations the board have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with UK Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

The financial statements are required by law to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Association and of the income and expenditure of the Association for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the board is required to:

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and the Statement of Recommended Practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Association will continue in business.

The board is responsible for keeping proper books of account that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Association and enable them to ensure that its financial statements comply with the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and the Accounting Direction for Private Registered Providers of Social Housing 2022. It is responsible for such internal control as it determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and has general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to it to safeguard the assets of the Association and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

The directors have decided to prepare voluntarily a Corporate Governance Statement as if the company were required to comply with the Listing Rules and the Disclosure Guidance and Transparency Rules of the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to those matters.

Under applicable law and regulations, the board are also responsible for preparing a Strategic Report and a Board Report that complies with that law and those regulations.

The board are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the company's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

We consider the annual report and accounts, taken as a whole, are fair, balanced and understandable and provide the information necessary for the board to assess the Association's position and performance, business model and strategy.

Going concern

The board, after reviewing the Association's budget for 2024 to 2025 and the Group's medium term financial position as detailed in the 30-year business plan is of the opinion that, taking account of severe but plausible downsides, the Association has adequate resources to continue in business for the foreseeable future. The board therefore continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual financial statements.

Viability statement

As required by the provisions of the UK Corporate Governance Code, the board has undertaken an assessment of the future prospects of the Association, as a participant of the Group assessment, taking into account its current position and principal risks. The assessment includes changes arising from the challenges to the sector such as high levels of inflation and interest rates, potential for further government imposed rent caps and the availability of resources.

This assessment was made using the following core business processes:

Thirty year business plan (the 'plan') – the board reviews each iteration of the plan during the year as part of its strategic planning process, the most recent business plan was approved in May 2024. This process includes detailed stress testing of the plan which involves flexing a number of assumptions underlying the forecast both individually and together under particular scenarios.

Risk management – as set out in the risk section of the strategic report, Bromford has a structured approach to the management of risk and the principal risks identified are reviewed regularly by the board.

Liquidity – based on the output of the plan and regular reforecasting of cashflows the board reviews the liquidity position of the Group ensuring funding is secured in accordance with Bromford's treasury policy. Current available cash and unutilised loan facilities are over £500m which gives significant headroom for committed spend and other forecast cash flows that arise.

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Board and Strategic Report For the year end 31 March 2024

In undertaking this assessment, a period of three years has been selected. For the initial year of this three year period there is a greater level of certainty because detailed annual budgets are prepared and regularly reforecast. Monthly cashflow forecasts are reviewed by the board covering a rolling 36 month period and are used to ensure sufficient facilities are in place. The largest single area of spend remains the development programme and the bulk of the committed programme completes within this timeframe. While development spend and required facilities are planned over a longer term than three years, the period chosen ensures that Bromford is viable beyond its usual development commitment timeframe.

On the basis of this and other matters considered and reviewed by the board during the year, the board has reasonable expectations that MHS will be able to continue in operation and meet its liabilities as they fall due over the three year period used for this assessment.

Information for auditors

We the members of the board who held office at the date of approval of these Financial Statements as set out above confirm, so far as we are aware, that there is no relevant audit information of which the Association's auditors are unaware. We have taken all the steps that we ought to have taken as board members to make ourselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

Appointment of Auditor

Beever and Struthers have indicated their willingness to continue in office and, following a review of effectiveness by the Group's Audit and Risk Committee, will be proposed for re-appointment.

This report was approved for issue by the board on 17 July 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Steve Dando

Chair

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Merlin Housing Society Limited

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Merlin Housing Society Limited (the Association) for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Comprehensive Income, the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Changes in Reserves and the Statement of Cash Flows and the notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies in note 1. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Association's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of the Association's income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and the Accounting Direction for Private Registered Providers of Social Housing 2022.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

We were first appointed as auditor of Merlin Housing Society Limited by the Board for the period ending 31 March 2021. The period of total uninterrupted engagement for the Association is for four financial years ending 31 March 2024. We have fulfilled our ethical responsibilities under, and we remain independent of the Association in accordance with, UK ethical requirements including the FRC Ethical Standard. No non-audit services prohibited by that standard were provided.

Our application of materiality and an overview of the scope of our audit

Materiality for the financial statements as a whole was set at £1,645,800, determined with reference to a benchmark of Turnover (of which it represents 2%). We consider turnover to be the most appropriate benchmark and more appropriate than a profit-based benchmark as the Association is a not-for-profit organisation and the focus is on turnover rather than any surpluses, which are reinvested in the Association.

We agreed to report to the Audit and Risk Committee any corrected or uncorrected identified misstatements exceeding £82,290, in addition to other identified misstatements that warranted reporting on qualitative grounds.

Key Audit Matters

Recoverability of stock and work in progress

The risk – significant risk medium value

The Association recorded turnover from properties developed for first tranche shared ownership sale of £4.8m (2023: £5.1m). Other property sales (such as staircasing, RTB and asset disposals) generated a surplus of £5.0m (2023: £5.5m). At 31 March 2024, the Association held no unsold properties within current assets (2023: £nil). There was £0.4m of work in progress in relation to properties being developed for sale but still under construction at 31 March 2024 (2023: £1.3m).

Refer to pages 29 to 37 (accounting policies) and page 48 (financial disclosures).

Our response

Our procedures included the following tests of detail:

- **Test of detail:** Agreeing the calculation of the surplus on sale for a sample of sales in the period.
- **Assessment of recoverability:** For a sample of development schemes, we reviewed the carrying value of the Association's stock and work-in-progress at the year-end including the financial appraisals of each scheme. This

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included testing on a sample basis the expected profitability of the current schemes and reviewing post year-end sales of properties held in stock at 31 March 2024.

Our results

We found no evidence that the year-end balance of stock and work in progress is overstated at the year end.

Our review of schemes under development did not identify any indication of work in progress that required provision or impairment write down.

We found no errors in the calculation of surplus on sale of properties.

Valuation of defined benefit pension obligations

The risk – significant risk high value

The Association participates in one defined benefit pension scheme, the Avon Pension Fund. The actuaries of the scheme valued the pension liabilities for Section 28 of FRS 102 purposes, the net pension liability on this scheme at 31 March 2024 is £5,052k (2023: £151k).

The financial statements disclose the assumptions used by the Association in completing the valuation of the pension deficit and the movements. The effect of these matters is that we determined that post-retirement benefits obligation has a high degree of estimation uncertainty.

Refer to pages 29 to 37 (accounting policies) and pages 55 to 59 (financial disclosures).

Our response

Our procedures included the following:

- **Assessing the credentials of the scheme's actuaries:** We reviewed the credentials of the scheme actuaries to assess that they are one of the small number of experienced, skilled advisors appointed to undertake the pension scheme valuations, as we place reliance on their valuation.
- **Confirmation of value:** We challenged, with the support of our own actuarial expert, the key assumptions and actuarial methodology applied, including the discount rate, inflation rate and mortality/life expectancy.
- **Test of detail:** We agreed the relevant accounting entries and disclosures in the financial statements to the report prepared by the scheme actuaries.

Our response

We confirmed that the assumptions used in the calculation of the balances in the financial statements are within reasonable parameters and are in line with the recommendations of the scheme's actuaries. We are satisfied that whilst there is some uncertainty in relation to the pension scheme valuation due to the current economic conditions, this does not impact on the true and fairness of the financial statements.

Treasury management and going concern

The risk – significant risk high value

The Association posted a full year surplus of £26.5m before actuarial movements on pension schemes (2023: £32.1m) (refer to pages 29 to 37 (accounting policies) and page 25 (financial disclosures)).

At 31 March 2024 the Association had borrowings of £161.8m (2023: £162.2m) (refer to pages 29 to 37 (accounting policies) and page 50 (financial disclosures)).

The risk is that the Association might have insufficient liquidity to finance its significant development programme, or might breach a funding covenant set out within the agreements in place with a range of funders.

Our response

Our procedures included the following:

- **Assessment of recoverability:** Reviewed the Association's 2024/25 budget and longer-term financial forecasts, and the underlying assumptions, to assess the Association's ability to service and repay the debt. We also reviewed the stress testing performed by the Association on its long-term financial plan.
- **Confirmation of value:** Agreed loan balances to the accounting records and to external confirmation from the funders.

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- **Test of detail:** Tested the detailed calculations for loan covenant compliance prepared by management, both for the year ended 31 March 2024 and projected future performance.

Our results

Our audit work concluded that all loan covenants were comfortably met at 31 March 2024. We confirmed that as at 31 March 2024 the Association held cash reserves of £2.8m (2023: £27.1m) and had no undrawn loan facilities (2023: £190.0m). The Association also has access to on lending from Bromford Housing Group Limited, which as at 31 March 2024 held cash reserves of £94.2m (2023: £125.7m), and had undrawn loan facilities of £449.7m (2023: £337.7m). This available funding is sufficient to meet committed capital expenditure at 31 March 2024.

Forecast performance at 31 March 2025 shows a similar position, with gearing and interest cover forecast to be 42% and 290% respectively, against covenant limits of 67% and 110% respectively.

We concluded that across a range of stress testing scenarios carried out on its longer-term financial forecasts, including those linked to the current economic conditions, the Group and Association remains comfortably within its funding covenants.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Board's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Board with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Board and Strategic Report, other than the financial statements and our Auditor's report thereon. The Board is responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 or the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the Association has not maintained a satisfactory system of control over transactions; or
- the Association has not kept adequate accounting records; or
- the Association's financial statements are not in agreement with books of account; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

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Corporate governance disclosures

We have reviewed the directors' statement in relation to going concern, longer-term viability and that part of the Corporate Governance Statement relating to the entity's voluntary compliance with the provisions of the UK Corporate Governance Code.

Based on the work undertaken as part of our audit, we have concluded that each of the following elements of the Corporate Governance Statement is materially consistent with the financial statements and our knowledge obtained during the audit:

- Directors' statement with regards the appropriateness of adopting the going concern basis of accounting and any material uncertainties identified set out on page 18;
- Directors' explanation as to their assessment of the Association's prospects, the period this assessment covers and why the period is appropriate set out on page 18;
- Director's statement on whether it has a reasonable expectation that the Association will be able to continue in operation and meets its liabilities set out on page 18;
- Directors' statement on fair, balanced and understandable set out on page 18;
- Board's confirmation that it has carried out a robust assessment of the emerging and principal risks set out on pages 7 to 11;
- Section of the annual report that describes the review of effectiveness of risk management and internal control systems set out on page 5; and;
- Section describing the work of the audit committee set out on pages 12 to 14.

Responsibilities of the Board

As explained more fully in the Statement of Board's Responsibilities set out on page 17 the Board is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Board determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Board is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Board either intends to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and then design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

In identifying and addressing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, our procedures included the following:

- We obtained an understanding of laws and regulations that affect the Association, focusing on those that had a direct effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on its operations. Key laws and regulations that we identified included the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act, the Statement of Recommended Practice for registered housing providers: Housing SORP 2018, the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, the

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Accounting Direction for Private Registered Providers of Social Housing 2022, tax legislation, health and safety legislation, and employment legislation.

- We enquired of the Board and reviewed correspondence and Board meeting minutes for evidence of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations. We also reviewed controls the Board have in place, where necessary, to ensure compliance.
- We gained an understanding of the controls that the Board have in place to prevent and detect fraud. We enquired of the Board about any incidences of fraud that had taken place during the accounting period.
- The risk of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations and fraud was discussed within the audit team and tests were planned and performed to address these risks. We identified the potential for fraud in the following areas: laws related to the construction and provision of social housing, recognising the nature of the Association's activities and the regulated nature of the Association's activities.
- We reviewed financial statements disclosures and tested to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations discussed above.
- We enquired of the Board about actual and potential litigation and claims.
- We performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that might indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud.
- In addressing the risk of fraud due to management override of internal controls we tested the appropriateness of journal entries and assessed whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates were indicative of a potential bias.

Due to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations and cannot be expected to detect all fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the Association's members as a body, in accordance with section 87 of the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and Section 128 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Association's members those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Association's members or the Association for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Beever and Struthers
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

The Colmore Building
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

Date: 23 July 2024

Merlin Housing Society Limited

**Statement of Comprehensive Income
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

	Notes	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Turnover	2,3	82,290	76,508
Cost of sales	2	(4,004)	(3,169)
Operating costs	2	(51,231)	(38,031)
(Loss)/gain on revaluation of investment properties	13	(65)	35
Gain on disposal of property assets	31	4,981	5,497
Operating surplus	5	31,971	40,840
Interest receivable	6	150	65
Interest and financing costs	7	(5,660)	(8,815)
Surplus before tax		26,461	32,090
Taxation	10	-	-
Surplus for the year after tax		26,461	32,090
Actuarial (loss)/gain	33	(6,312)	4,139
Total comprehensive income for the year		20,149	36,229

The notes on pages 29 to 60 form an integral part of these financial statements.

The Association's results relate wholly to continuing activities.

There were no recognised gains and losses other than those included in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

The financial statements on pages 25 to 60 were approved and authorised for issue by the board on 17 July 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:



Steve Dando
Chair



Robert Nettleton
Chief Executive



Sarah Beal
Company Secretary

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Statement of Financial Position As at 31 March 2024

	Notes	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets - housing properties	11	581,476	518,560
Investment properties	13	3,480	3,730
Tangible fixed assets - other	14	6,189	6,406
Intangible fixed assets	15	-	-
		<u>591,145</u>	<u>528,696</u>
Current assets			
Stocks	16	1,393	1,655
Trade and other debtors	17	5,314	4,630
Investments	18	2,476	2,366
Cash and cash equivalents	19	2,784	27,113
		<u>11,967</u>	<u>35,764</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	20	<u>(112,700)</u>	<u>(50,728)</u>
Net current liabilities		<u>(100,733)</u>	<u>(14,964)</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>490,412</u>	<u>513,732</u>
Creditors - amounts falling due after more than one year			
Loans	21	(161,843)	(162,237)
Deferred capital grant	22	(18,796)	(11,141)
Other creditors	21	(4,125)	(60,272)
		<u>(184,764)</u>	<u>(233,650)</u>
Provisions for liabilities			
Pension liability	33	(5,052)	(151)
Other provisions	24	(562)	(46)
Total net assets		<u>300,034</u>	<u>279,885</u>
Reserves			
Called up share capital	25	-	-
Income and expenditure reserve		298,058	277,909
Restricted reserve		1,976	1,976
Total reserves		<u>300,034</u>	<u>279,885</u>

The notes on pages 29 to 60 form an integral part of these financial statements.

The financial statements on pages 25 to 60 were approved and authorised for issue by the board on 17 July 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:



Steve Dando, Chair



Robert Nettleton, Chief Executive



Sarah Beal, Company Secretary

Merlin Housing Society Limited

**Statement of Changes in Reserves
As at 31 March 2024**

	Restricted reserve £'000	Income and expenditure reserve £'000	Total £'000
Balance at 1 April 2022	1,976	241,680	243,656
Surplus for the year	-	32,090	32,090
Actuarial gain on defined benefit scheme	-	4,139	4,139
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	36,229	36,229
Balance at 31 March 2023	1,976	277,909	279,885
Surplus for the year	-	26,461	26,461
Actuarial loss on defined benefit scheme	-	(6,312)	(6,312)
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	20,149	20,149
Balance at 31 March 2024	<u>1,976</u>	<u>298,058</u>	<u>300,034</u>

The notes on pages 29 to 60 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Statement of Cashflows As at 31 March 2024

	2024		2023	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Net cash generated from operating activities (note 28)		52,324		(4,811)
Cashflow from investing activities				
Purchase of tangible fixed assets - new housing properties	(54,306)		(30,120)	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets - other	(89)		(2)	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets - existing housing properties	(20,894)		(18,409)	
Transfers (to) investments	-		122	
Grants received	6,046		100	
Interest received	17		27	
Net cashflow from investing activities		(69,226)		(48,282)
Cashflow from financing activities				
Interest paid	(7,427)		(9,759)	
Repayment of borrowings	-		(375)	
Net cashflow from financing activities		(7,427)		(10,134)
Net change in cash and cash equivalents		(24,329)		(63,227)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		27,113		90,340
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		2,784		27,113

The notes on pages 29 to 60 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

Legal status

Merlin Housing Society Limited (MHS) is incorporated in England under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) as a Private Registered Provider of Social Housing. The registered office is Shannon Way, Ashchurch, Tewksbury, GL20 8ND.

1. Principal accounting policies

The accounting policies across Bromford Group have been aligned for financial reporting and any reference to the Group also apply to MHS. The Group's financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (UK GAAP) and the Statement of Recommended Practice for registered housing providers: Housing SORP 2018.

The financial statements comply with the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies (Group Accounts) Regulations 1969, the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and the Accounting Direction for Private Registered Providers of Social Housing 2022.

The accounts are prepared on the historical cost basis of accounting as modified by the revaluation of investment properties and are presented in GBP sterling.

The Association's financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102. The Association meets the definition of a public benefit entity (PBE).

Going concern

The board, after reviewing the company budgets for 2024 to 2025 and the Group's medium term financial position as detailed in the 30-year business plan, is of the opinion that, taking account of severe but plausible downsides, the Group and Association have adequate resources to continue in business for the foreseeable future. The board therefore continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual financial statements.

Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for revenues and expenses during the year. However, the nature of estimation means that actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. The following judgements (apart from those involving estimates) have had the most significant effect on amounts recognised in the financial statements.

- **Development expenditure** - The Association capitalises development expenditure in accordance with the accounting policy described on page xx. Initial capitalisation of costs is based on management's judgement that the development scheme is likely to proceed. Costs capitalised in this way are regularly reviewed and any costs identified as abortive are charged in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.
- **Categorisation of housing properties** - The Association has undertaken a detailed review of the intended use of all housing properties. In determining the intended use, the Group has considered if the asset is held for social benefit or to earn commercial rentals. The Group has determined that market rented properties and commercial properties are investment properties.
- **Impairment** - The Association has identified a cash generating unit for impairment assessment purposes during development and construction at a programme level, with subsequent impairment assessment once in management at a property scheme level.

**Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

Other key sources of estimation and assumptions:

- **Tangible fixed assets** - Other than investment properties, tangible fixed assets are depreciated over their useful lives taking into account residual values, where appropriate. The actual lives of the assets and residual values are assessed annually and may vary depending on a number of factors. In re-assessing asset lives, factors such as technological innovation, product life cycles and maintenance programmes are taken into account. Residual value assessments consider issues such as future market conditions, the remaining life of the asset and projected disposal values.
- **Pension and other post-employment benefits** - The cost of defined benefit pension plans and other post-employment benefits are determined using actuarial valuations. The actuarial valuation involves making assumptions about discount rates, future salary increases, mortality rates and future pension increases. Due to the complexity of the valuation, the underlying assumptions and the long-term nature of these plans, such estimates are subject to significant uncertainty. In determining the appropriate discount rate, the actuary considers the interest rates of corporate bonds in the respective currency with at least AA rating, with extrapolated maturities corresponding to the expected duration of the defined benefit obligation. The underlying bonds are further reviewed for quality and those having excessive credit spreads are removed from the population bonds on which the discount rate is based, on the basis that they do not represent high quality bonds. The mortality rate is based on publicly available mortality tables for the specific sector. Future salary and pension increases are based on expected future inflation rates for the respective sector. Further details are given in note 33.
- **Impairment of non-financial assets** - Reviews for impairment of housing properties are carried out when a trigger has occurred and any impairment loss in a cash generating unit is recognised by a charge to the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

Impairment is recognised where the carrying value of a cash generating unit exceeds the higher of its net realisable value or its value in use. A cash generating unit is normally a group of properties at scheme level whose cash income can be separately identified.

Following a trigger for impairment, the Association perform impairment tests based on fair value less costs to sell or a value in use calculation. The fair value less costs to sell calculation is based on available data from sales transactions in an arm's length transaction on similar cash generating units (properties) or observable market prices less incremental costs for disposing of the properties. The value in use calculation is based on either a depreciated replacement cost or a discounted cash flow model.

The depreciated replacement cost is based on available data of the cost of constructing or acquiring replacement properties to provide the same level of service potential to the Association as the existing property. The cash flows are derived from the business plan for the next 30 years and do not include any restructuring activities that the Group is not yet committed to nor any significant future investments that will enhance the asset's performance of the cash generating unit being tested.

The recoverable amount is most sensitive to the discount rate used for the discounted cash flow model as well as the expected future cash flows and the growth rate used for extrapolation purposes.

Following the assessment of the indicators of impairment, no adjustment to carrying values was considered necessary.

- **Rent arrears and bad debt provisions** - The amount of arrears that will not be collected is estimated on experience of collection of different types of debt.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

Turnover and revenue recognition

Turnover is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and excludes VAT (where applicable). The Association generates the following material income streams:

Rental income receivable

Rental income is shown net of void losses. Rental income is recognised from the point when properties under development reach practical completion and are formally let. For schemes managed by agents, income is shown as rent receivable and management fees payable to agents are included in operating costs.

Shared ownership first tranche sales

Income from first tranche sales is recognised at the point of legal completion of the sale. The surplus or deficit arising on a first tranche sale is shown after deducting the cost of the properties and related sale expenses.

Service charge income

Service charge income and costs are recognised on an accrual basis. The Association operates both fixed and variable service charges on a scheme by scheme basis in full consultation with residents. Where variable service charges are used the charges will include an allowance for the surplus or deficit from prior years, with the surplus being returned to residents by a reduced charge and a deficit being recovered by a higher charge.

Until these are returned or recovered, they are held as creditors or debtors in the Statement of Financial Position. Where periodic expenditure is required, a provision may be built up over the years, in consultation with the residents. Until these costs are incurred this liability is held in the Statement of Financial Position within long term creditors.

Grants

Grants received from non-government sources are recognised under the performance model. If there are no specific performance requirements the grants are recognised when received or receivable. If there are specific performance requirements, the grant is recognised in turnover when the performance requirements are met.

Where developments have been financed wholly or partly by social housing grant (SHG) and other grants, the income is recognised in turnover (using the accruals model) over the estimated useful life of the assets excluding land which it funds.

Loan interest costs

Loan interest costs are calculated using the effective interest rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments or receipts through the expected life of a financial instrument and is determined based on the carrying amount of the financial liability at initial recognition.

Loan finance issuance costs

Arrangement fees, agency fees and related legal fees payable when entering new loans are capitalised then charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income over the life of the loan via the effective interest rate method.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

Taxation

The Association is registered as a charity with HM Revenue & Customs. By virtue of S.478 Corporation Tax Act 2010, the Association is exempt from corporation tax. The Association pays corporation tax at the rate applicable on any surplus it generates from non-charitable activities.

The tax expense for the period comprises current tax. Tax is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income, except that where a tax change arises as a result of an item recognised as other comprehensive income or recognised directly in equity. In such cases, the tax charge is also recognised in other comprehensive income or directly in equity as appropriate.

The current income tax charge is calculated based on tax rates and laws that have been enacted or substantively enacted by the reporting date where the Association operate and generate taxable income.

Value Added Tax

The Association charges VAT on some of its income and is able to recover part of the VAT it incurs on expenditure. All amounts disclosed in the accounts are inclusive of VAT to the extent that it is suffered by the Association and is not recoverable. The balance receivable or payable at the year-end is within current assets or current liabilities.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost, less accumulated depreciation.

Housing properties

Cost includes the cost of acquiring land and buildings, directly attributable development costs, interest at the average cost of borrowing for the development period and expenditure incurred in respect of improvements which comprise the modernisation and extension of existing properties. Donated land/assets or assets acquired at below market value from a government source, i.e. local authority, are included as a liability in the Statement of Financial Position at the fair value less consideration paid.

Housing properties under construction are stated at cost and are not depreciated. These are reclassified as housing properties on practical completion.

Freehold land is not depreciated.

Where a housing property comprises two or more major components with substantially different useful economic lives (UELs), each component is accounted for separately and depreciated over its individual UEL. Expenditure relating to subsequent replacement or renewal of components is capitalised as incurred.

The Association depreciates freehold housing properties by component on a straight-line basis over the estimated UELs of the component categories.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

UEls for identified components are as follows:

	Years
• Boilers	15
• Heating systems	30
• Kitchens	20
• Bathrooms	30
• Roofs	50 to 65
• Windows and doors	25 to 30
• Structure – houses	100 to 130
• Structure – flats	75 to 100
• Structure – rooms and bedsits	40

The Association depreciates housing properties held on long leases in the same manner as freehold properties, except where the unexpired lease term is shorter than the longest component life envisaged, in which case the unexpired term of the lease is adopted as the useful economic life of the relevant component category.

Depreciation is charged on other tangible fixed assets on a straight-line basis over the expected economic useful lives which are as follows:

	Years
• Motor vehicles	6 (20% residual value)
• Fixtures, fittings, plant and equipment	5
• Computer hardware	3
• Office buildings	50

Works to existing properties

Works to existing properties has been capitalised when:

A component which has been treated separately for depreciation purposes and depreciated over its useful economic life is replaced or restored; or

Subsequent expenditure provides an enhancement of economic benefits in excess of the previously assessed standard of performance. Such enhancement can occur if the improvements result in an increase in rental income, a reduction in future maintenance costs or a significant extension of the life of the property.

Works to existing properties which do not meet the above criteria have been charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income as incurred.

Non-component works to existing properties

Expenditure incurred which relates to an improvement, which is defined as an increase in the net rental stream or the life of a property, has been capitalised. Expenditure incurred on other major repairs, cyclical and day-to-day repairs to housing properties is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income in the period in which it is incurred.

Low cost home ownership properties

The costs of low-cost home ownership properties are split between current and fixed assets based on the first tranche portion. The first tranche portion is accounted for as a current asset and the sale proceeds shown in turnover. The remaining element of the shared ownership property is accounted for as a fixed asset and subsequent sales treated as sales of fixed assets.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

Capitalisation of interest and administration costs

Interest on loans financing development is capitalised up to the date of the completion of the scheme and only when development activity is in progress. The interest capitalised is either on borrowings specifically taken to finance a scheme or on net borrowings to the extent that they are deemed to be financing a scheme. This treatment applies irrespective of the original purpose for which the loan was raised. For the period ending 31 March 2024, interest has been capitalised at an average rate of 3.72% (2023: 3.55%) that reflects the weighted average effective interest rate on the Group's borrowings required to finance housing property developments.

Administration costs relating to development activities are capitalised only to the extent that they are incremental to the development process and directly attributable to bringing the property into their intended use.

Investment property

Investment property includes commercial and other properties held by the Group for reasons other than social benefit or for use in the business. Investment property is measured at cost on initial recognition, which includes purchase cost and any directly attributable expenditure and subsequently at fair value at the reporting date. Fair value is determined annually by external valuers and is derived from the current market rents and investment property yields for comparable real estate, adjusted if necessary, for any difference in the nature, location or condition of the specific asset. No depreciation is provided. Changes in fair value are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

Valuation of investments

Investments in subsidiaries are measured at cost less any accumulated impairment. Where merger relief is applicable, the cost of the investment in a subsidiary undertaking is measured at the nominal value of the shares issued together with the fair value of any additional consideration paid.

Current asset investments

Current asset investments include cash and cash equivalents invested for periods of more than 30 days which cannot be accessed within 24 hours. They are recognised initially at cost and subsequently at fair value at the reporting date. Any change in valuation between reporting dates is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

Stock and properties held for sale

Stocks of materials are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value. Work in progress and finished goods include labour and attributable overheads. Cost of materials is based on the cost of purchase on an average costing basis. Net realisable value is the estimated selling price less costs to complete and sell.

Properties developed for outright sale are included in current assets as they are intended to be sold, at the lower of cost or estimated selling price less costs to complete and sell.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash balances and call deposits. Bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Association's cash management are included as a component of cash and cash equivalents for the purpose only of the Statement of Cash Flows.

Short-term debtors and creditors

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and receivable or payable within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income in other operating expenses.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

Social housing and other government grants

Where developments have been financed wholly or partly by Social Housing Grant (SHG) and other grants, the amount of the grant received has been included in the Statement of Financial Position as deferred income. This income is recognised in turnover using the accruals model over the estimated useful life of the assets excluding land which it funds. SHG received for items of cost written off in the Statement of Comprehensive Income is included as part of turnover.

When SHG in respect of housing properties in the course of construction exceeds the total cost incurred to date in respect of those properties, the excess is shown as a current liability.

SHG must be recycled by the Association if a property is sold, or if another relevant event takes place. In these cases, the SHG can be used for projects approved by Homes England. However, SHG may have to be repaid if certain conditions are not met. In that event, the amount repayable is shown in the Statement of Financial Position as a subordinated unsecured repayable debt.

Recycling of capital grant

Social housing grant which has been recycled is transferred to the Recycled Grant Fund and appears as a creditor until it is either used to fund the acquisition of new properties or is repaid.

Defined contribution pensions

The Association provides a defined contribution stakeholder pension scheme for employees not included in the defined benefit scheme. The employer contribution to the scheme is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income as it becomes payable. The assets of the scheme are kept separately from those of the Association.

Defined benefit pensions

The cost of providing retirement pensions and related benefits is charged to management expenses over the periods benefiting from the employees' services.

The disclosures in the accounts follow the requirements of Section 28 of FRS 102 in relation to multi-employer funded schemes in which the Association has a participating interest.

The Association participates in the defined benefit Avon Pension Fund scheme which is closed to new employees. The amounts charged to operating surplus are the costs arising from the employee services rendered during the period and the cost of plan introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs. The net interest cost on the net defined benefit liability is charged to surplus for the year and included within finance costs. Remeasurement of the net assets/defined liability are recognised in other comprehensive income. Defined benefit schemes are funded in separate trustee administered funds.

Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The actuarial valuations are obtained triennially and are updated at each reporting date.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

Financial instruments

Financial assets and financial liabilities are initially measured at the transaction price adjusted, where the financial asset or liability is not required to be held at fair value, for any directly attributable costs of acquisition.

At the end of each reporting period, financial instruments are measured as follows, without any deduction for transaction costs the entity may incur on sale or other disposal:

Debt instruments that meet the conditions in paragraph 11.8(b) of FRS 102 are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method, except where the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction. In this case the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest for a similar debt.

Commitments to receive or make a loan to another entity which meet the conditions in para 11.8(c) of FRS 102 are measured at cost less impairment.

Financial instruments held by the Group are classified as follows:

- Cash is held at cost;
- Financial assets such as current asset investments and receivables are classified as loans and receivables and held at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method;
- Financial liabilities such as bonds and loans are held at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method;
- Loans to or from subsidiaries including those that are due on demand are held at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method;
- Commitments to receive or make a loan to another entity which meet the conditions above are held at cost less impairment;
- An investment in another entity's equity instruments other than non-convertible preference shares and non-puttable ordinary and preference shares are held at fair value;
- Derivatives such as interest rate swaps are classified as financial assets or financial liabilities at fair value.

Financial assets and financial liabilities at fair value are classified using the following fair value hierarchy:

- The best evidence of fair value is a quoted price in an active market;
- When quoted prices are unavailable, the price of a recent transaction for an identical asset, adjusted to reflect any circumstances specific to the sale, such as a distress sale, if appropriate;
- Where there is no active market or recent transactions then a valuation technique is used to estimate what the transaction price would have been on the measurement date in an arm's length exchange motivated by normal business considerations.

Impairment of financial assets

Financial assets are assessed at each reporting date to determine whether there is any objective evidence that a financial asset or group of financial assets is impaired. If there is objective evidence of impairment, an impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income immediately.

The following financial instruments are assessed individually for impairment:

- All equity instruments regardless of significance; and
- Other financial assets that are individually significant.

Other financial instruments are assessed for impairment either individually or grouped on the basis of similar credit risk characteristics.

An impairment loss is measured as follows on instruments measured at cost or amortised cost:

- For an instrument measured at amortised cost, the impairment loss is the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the present value of the estimated future cash flows discounted at the asset's original effective interest rate;

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

- For an instrument measured at cost less impairment, the impairment loss is the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the best estimate of the amount that the entity would receive for the asset if it were to be sold at the reporting date.

If, in a subsequent period, the amount of an impairment loss decreases and the decrease can be related objectively to an event occurring after the impairment was recognised, the previously recognised impairment loss is reversed either directly or by adjusting an allowance account. The reversal cannot result in a carrying amount (net of any allowance account) which exceeds what the carrying amount would have been had the impairment not previously been recognised. The amount of the reversal is recognised in Statement of Comprehensive Income immediately.

Carrying amounts

The carrying amounts of the Association's non-financial assets, other than investment property and deferred tax assets, are reviewed at each reporting date to determine whether there is any indication of impairment. If any such indication exists, then the asset's recoverable amount is estimated. The recoverable amount of an asset or cash-generating unit (CGU) is the greater of its value in use and its fair value less costs to sell. In assessing value in use, the estimated future cash flows are discounted to their present value using a pre-tax discount rate that reflects current market assessments of the time value of money and the risks specific to the asset. For the purpose of impairment testing, assets that cannot be tested individually are grouped together into the smallest group of assets that generates cash inflows from continuing use that are largely independent of the cash inflows of other assets or groups of assets (the "CGU").

An impairment loss is recognised if the carrying amount of an asset or its CGU exceeds its estimated recoverable amount. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

		2024					
2. Turnover and operating surplus	Note	Turnover £'000	Cost of sales £'000	Operating costs £'000	Loss on revaluation of investments £'000	Surplus on disposal £'000	Operating surplus £'000
Social housing lettings							
Housing accommodation	3	61,296	-	(41,545)	-	-	19,751
Supported housing accommodation	3	12,965	-	(8,153)	-	-	4,812
Shared ownership accommodation	3	2,079	-	(1,038)	-	-	1,041
		<u>76,340</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(50,736)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>25,604</u>
Other social housing activities							
First tranche shared ownership sales		4,754	(4,004)	-	-	-	750
Supported people contract income		351	-	(119)	-	-	232
Agency services		116	-	(7)	-	-	109
Other		13	-	258	-	-	271
Loss on revaluation of investments		-	-	-	(65)	-	(65)
Gain on disposal of property, plant and equipment		-	-	-	-	4,981	4,981
Non-social housing activities							
Market rents		36	-	(59)	-	-	(23)
Sewerage services		-	-	(246)	-	-	(246)
Commercial rents		680	-	(322)	-	-	358
		<u>82,290</u>	<u>(4,004)</u>	<u>(51,231)</u>	<u>(65)</u>	<u>4,981</u>	<u>31,971</u>

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

		2023					
2. Turnover and operating surplus	Note	Turnover £'000	Cost of sales £'000	Operating costs £'000	Gain on revaluation of investments £'000	Surplus on disposal £'000	Operating surplus £'000
Social housing lettings							
Housing accommodation	3	55,625	-	(29,978)	-	-	25,647
Supported housing accommodation	3	11,584	-	(4,513)	-	-	7,071
Shared ownership accommodation	3	1,905	-	(841)	-	-	1,064
		<u>69,114</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(35,332)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>33,782</u>
Other social housing activities							
First tranche shared ownership sales		5,131	(3,169)	-	-	-	1,962
Supported people contract income		347	-	(557)	-	-	(210)
Agency services		348	-	(21)	-	-	327
Sales and development		12	-	(606)	-	-	(594)
Other		253	-	(1,004)	-	-	(751)
Gain on revaluation of investments		-	-	-	35	-	35
Gain on disposal of property, plant and equipment		-	-	-	-	5,497	5,497
Non-social housing activities							
Market rents		451	-	(25)	-	-	426
Sewerage services		-	-	(214)	-	-	(214)
Commercial rents		852	-	(272)	-	-	580
		<u>76,508</u>	<u>(3,169)</u>	<u>(38,031)</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>5,497</u>	<u>40,840</u>

Merlin Housing Society Limited

**Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

	2024			2023	
3. Income and expenditure from social housing lettings					
	Housing accommodation	Supported housing for older people	Shared Ownership	Total	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income					
Rent receivable net of identifiable service charge	59,095	9,458	1,589	70,142	63,402
Service charge income	2,023	3,178	456	5,657	5,331
Charges for support services	52	329	28	409	268
Amortised government grants	110	-	6	116	113
Other grants	16	-	-	16	-
Turnover from social housing lettings	61,296	12,965	2,079	76,340	69,114
Expenditure					
Management	8,045	2,415	190	10,650	7,344
Service charge costs	4,855	1,710	53	6,618	5,786
Routine maintenance	10,404	1,399	50	11,853	5,678
Planned maintenance	4,927	521	38	5,486	2,759
Major repairs expenditure	3,534	346	154	4,034	3,686
Bad debts	170	(22)	(10)	138	(209)
Depreciation of housing properties	9,610	1,784	563	11,957	10,288
Operating expenditure on social housing lettings	41,545	8,153	1,038	50,736	35,332
Operating surplus on social housing lettings	19,751	4,812	1,041	25,604	33,782
Voids	(670)	(259)	(67)	(996)	(1,127)

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024

4. Accommodation - owned, managed and in development	At 1 April 2023 Number	Additions Number	Disposals Number	Other Number	At 31 March 2024 Number
Social housing					
General Needs housing - social rent	9,716	178	(147)	(7)	9,740
General Needs housing - affordable/intermediate rent	534	-	(31)	(13)	490
Supported housing	1,802	-	-	10	1,812
Low-cost home ownership	500	45	(8)	-	537
Leasehold	672	-	(3)	2	671
Total social housing units	13,224	223	(189)	(8)	13,250
Non-social housing					
Staff accommodation	1	-	-	-	1
Market rent	10	-	-	-	10
Commercial	63	1	(3)	1	62
Offices and resource	43	-	(2)	5	46
Retained freehold	103	-	-	3	106
Total non-social housing units	220	1	(5)	9	225
Owned and managed	13,141	224	(36)	21	13,350
Owned and managed by others	42	-	-	(20)	22
Managed for others	261	-	(158)	-	103
	13,444	224	(194)	1	13,475
Total under development	11	235	-	(215)	31
Garages/parking spaces	2,519	-	(73)	7	2,453

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

5. Surplus on ordinary activities

The surplus on ordinary activities is stated after charging

2024	2023
£'000	£'000

Auditor's remuneration

- Audit of financial statements

39	33
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6. Interest receivable and income from investments

2024	2023
£'000	£'000

Interest receivable from cash, deposits and intragroup loans

150	65
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7. Interest payable and similar charges

2024	2023
£'000	£'000

Interest on loans, overdrafts and other financing

Repayable wholly within five years

357	615
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Repayable wholly or partly in more than five years

4,669	4,678
5,026	5,293

On loans from Bromford Housing Group Limited

1,235	3,182
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Other finance charges

176	187
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Amortised net finance costs

38	50
6,475	8,712

Interest payable capitalised on housing properties under construction
3.72% (2023: 3.55%)

(783)	(4)
5,692	8,708

Interest on pension scheme liabilities

2,053	1,594
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Expected return on employer assets

(2,085)	(1,487)
5,660	8,815

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

8. Colleague costs	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Wages and salaries	19,428	3,947
Social security costs	1,977	417
Other pension costs	1,166	638
	<u>22,571</u>	<u>5,002</u>

The average number of full-time equivalent employees (including Executive Directors) employed during the year:

	2024	2023
	No.	No.
Asset management	214	82
Central services	79	5
Development, construction and sales	31	3
Housing management and support	171	31
	<u>495</u>	<u>121</u>

A full-time equivalent employee is classed as working a 37.5 hour week.

The details above relate to colleagues directly attributable to Merlin Housing Society. The apportionment of colleague costs has been updated to reflect their activity. Colleagues in the Group are employed on a joint and several basis by Bromford Housing Group Limited and its members. Details of the number of FTE's whose total remuneration exceeds £60k are disclosed in the Group Accounts.

9. Directors' emoluments

Emoluments of directors are paid through Bromford Housing Group Limited and are disclosed in the Group Annual Report and Accounts. Directors' emoluments are part of the overheads recharged to the Association, however they cannot be separately identified.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

10. Taxation on surplus on ordinary activities	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Current tax		
UK corporation tax credit on ordinary activities	-	-
Over provision in previous years	-	-
Total current tax	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Deferred tax		
Origination and reversal of timing differences	-	-
Tax on surplus on ordinary activities	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total tax reconciliation		
Surplus on ordinary activities	<u>26,461</u>	<u>32,090</u>
Surplus on ordinary activities multiplied by standard rate of corporation tax in the UK of 25% (2023: 19%)	6,615	6,097
Surplus relating to charitable period	<u>(6,615)</u>	<u>(6,097)</u>
	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

	Housing properties held for letting £'000	Housing properties under construction £'000	Completed shared ownership housing properties £'000	Shared ownership properties under construction £'000	Total £'000
11. Tangible fixed assets - housing properties					
Cost					
At 1 April 2023	532,948	25,053	28,957	1,049	588,007
Additions	-	47,418	-	7,476	54,894
Replacement of components	21,543	-	-	-	21,543
Transferred on completion	41,845	(41,845)	5,747	(5,747)	-
Disposals	(736)	-	(375)	-	(1,111)
Components disposed	(919)	-	(31)	-	(950)
At 31 March 2024	594,681	30,626	34,298	2,778	662,383
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2023	68,903	-	544	-	69,447
Charge for the year	11,587	-	554	-	12,141
Disposals	(665)	-	(16)	-	(681)
At 31 March 2024	79,825	-	1,082	-	80,907
Net book value					
At 31 March 2024	514,856	30,626	33,216	2,778	581,476
At 31 March 2023	464,045	25,053	28,413	1,049	518,560
				2024	2023
				£'000	£'000
Housing property net book value in respect of long leaseholds				4,607	4,565
Housing property net book value in respect of freeholds				576,869	513,995
				581,476	518,560
Component depreciation within the depreciation charge				8,892	7,133
Development administration costs capitalised during the year				1,156	1,183
Aggregate amount of interest and finance cost included within the cost of housing properties				4,038	3,254

Properties held for security

Bromford Housing Association - Registered Social Housing Provider - has property pledged as security value (existing use value – social housing and market value – subject to tenancy) of £194m (2023: £590m). The number of units on which security was pledged amounted to 2,507 (2023: 6,497).

12. Expenditure on work to existing properties

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Replacement of components	21,543	17,485
Amounts charged to income and expenditure account	4,034	3,686
	25,577	21,171

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

13. Investment properties held for letting	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
As at 1 April	3,730	15,851
Enhancements	-	2
(Loss)/gain from adjustment in value		
Commercial investment properties	15	(38)
Market rent investment properties	(80)	73
Disposals		
Commercial investment properties	-	(195)
Market rent investment properties	(185)	(11,963)
As at 31 March	<u>3,480</u>	<u>3,730</u>

Investment properties (commercial and market rent) were valued at 31 March 2024 by professional qualified external valuers.

The valuation of investment properties was undertaken by Jones Lang Lasalle Limited, in accordance with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Valuation Standards. In valuing the properties, the following significant assumptions were applied

Discount rate	7.25%
Rental income increase	<u>2.1%</u>

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024

14. Tangible fixed assets - other

	Freehold offices £'000	Fixtures, fittings & Equipment £'000	Computer equipment £'000	Motor vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost					
At 1 April 2023	7,795	614	658	673	9,740
Additions	89	-	-	-	89
At 31 March 2024	7,884	614	658	673	9,829
Depreciation and impairment					
At 1 April 2023	1,963	319	532	520	3,334
Charge for the year	174	48	59	25	306
At 31 March 2024	2,137	367	591	545	3,640
Net book value					
At 31 March 2024	5,747	247	67	128	6,189
At 31 March 2023	5,832	295	126	153	6,406

15. Intangible fixed assets

	Software £'000
Cost	
At 1 April 2023	289
Additions	-
At 31 March 2024	289
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2023	289
Charge for the year	-
At 31 March 2024	289
Net book value	
At 31 March 2024	-
At 31 March 2023	-

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

16. Stocks and work in progress	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Land	672	-
Consumable stock	279	314
Cost of first tranche element of shared ownership properties	442	1,341
	<u>1,393</u>	<u>1,655</u>
Shared ownership properties		
Completed	-	-
Under construction	442	1,341
	<u>442</u>	<u>1,341</u>
17. Trade and other debtors	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Amounts falling due within one year		
Rent arrears	4,414	4,514
Less: provision for bad debts	(1,402)	(1,378)
	<u>3,012</u>	<u>3,136</u>
Trade debtors	-	13
Amounts due from group companies	-	95
Other debtors	1,256	909
Prepayments and accrued income	1,046	477
	<u>5,314</u>	<u>4,630</u>
18. Current asset investments	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Opening fair value at 1 April	2,366	2,450
Withdrawals from investments	-	(122)
Interest	110	38
Fair value at 31 March	<u>2,476</u>	<u>2,366</u>

Current asset investments include monies held by lenders in support of bond finance. These monies are placed in accounts charged by the lenders.

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

19. Cash and cash equivalents	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Cash at bank	<u>2,784</u>	<u>27,113</u>
	2,784	27,113

Included in the above are balances totalling £307k (2023: £304k) which are held in trust for shared ownership leaseholders.

20. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Prepaid rental income	3,492	2,754
Local Authority RTB share of proceeds	876	2,460
Trade creditors	1,748	1,118
Amounts due to group companies	102,452	39,520
Social security and other taxes	104	143
Funds held on trust	4	3
Deferred capital grant	267	140
Other creditors	509	598
Accruals and deferred income	<u>3,248</u>	<u>3,992</u>
	112,700	50,728

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

21. Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Loans	161,843	162,237
Loans due to group companies	3,100	59,100
Leaseholder sinking funds	1,025	966
Deferred capital grant	18,796	11,141
Recycled capital grant fund	-	206
	184,764	233,650
Loan repayment profile		
Repayable within one year	-	-
Repayable between one and two years	-	-
Repayable between two and five years	2,750	1,000
Repayable after five years	159,093	161,274
Less: Loan finance costs	-	(37)
	161,843	162,237
 The interest risk profile of loan liabilities are as follows		
	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Floating rate	-	-
Fixed rate - average 3.40% (2023: 3.40%)	161,843	162,274
	161,843	162,274
 Undrawn committed borrowing facilities (all secured) at 31 March were		
	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Expiring within one year	-	190,000
Expiring between one and two	-	-
Expiring between two and five years	-	-
Expiring after five years	-	-
	-	190,000

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

22. Deferred capital grant	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
At 1 April	11,281	11,303
Grants received in year	6,046	100
Transferred from group company	1,887	-
Recycled to Recycled Capital Grant Fund	(85)	(83)
Amortised in year	(117)	(115)
Amortised grant on disposal	51	76
At 31 March	19,063	11,281
Amount due to be released within one year	267	140
Amount due to be released in more than one year	18,796	11,141
	19,063	11,281

23. Recycled capital grant funds	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
At 1 April	206	254
Inputs to reserve		
Grants recycled	85	83
Interest accrued	-	3
Utilised		
Transfer to group company	(291)	(134)
At 31 March	-	206
Amounts due within one year	-	-
Amounts due after more than one year	-	206
	-	206
Amount three years or older where repayment may be required		-

24. Provision for liabilities and charges	£'000
At 1 April	46
Additions in year	516
At 31 March	562

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

25. Share Capital	2024	2023
	£	£
Issued and fully paid (nominal value £1 each)		
At 1 April	24	26
Issued during the year	-	3
Cancelled during the year	(1)	(5)
At 31 March	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>

The share capital of the Association consists of shares with a nominal value of £1 each, which carry no rights to dividends or other income. The shares are non-withdrawable and non-transferable. When a shareholder ceases to be a shareholder, the share is cancelled and the amount paid up becomes the property of the Association.

26. Reserves

Income and expenditure reserve - represents the net surplus which is not restricted.

Restricted reserve - under the terms of an agreement with South Gloucestershire Council, a proportion of the proceeds from disposal of vacant dwellings is to be held in a reserve. The reserve is used, inter alia, for the provision of affordable housing within the council area. This arrangement commenced in 2016 to 2017.

27. Analysis of changes in net debt	As at 1 April 2023 £'000	Cashflows £'000	Amortisation of premium / loan costs £'000	As at 31 March 2024 £'000
Cash at bank and cash equivalents	27,113	(24,329)	-	2,784
Short term investments	2,366	110	-	2,476
	<u>29,479</u>	<u>(24,219)</u>	-	<u>5,260</u>
Other loans				
Loans due within one year	-	-	-	-
Loans due after more than one year	(162,237)	-	394	(161,843)
Change in debt resulting from cashflows	<u>(132,758)</u>	<u>(24,219)</u>	<u>394</u>	<u>(156,583)</u>

Merlin Housing Society Limited

**Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

28. Cash flow from operating activities	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Surplus for the year	26,461	32,090
Adjustments for non-cash items		
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	12,447	10,611
Amortisation of intangible assets	-	7
Amortisation of government grant	(117)	(115)
Decrease/(increase) in stock	262	(1,496)
Increase in trade and other debtors	(1,878)	(132)
Decrease in trade and other creditors	(983)	(3,232)
Movement in intergroup balances	8,682	(65,434)
Increase/ (decrease) in provisions	517	(757)
Pension costs less contributions payable	(258)	63
Carrying amount of tangible fixed assets disposals	1,431	2,711
Carrying amount of tangible investment asset disposals	185	12,158
Adjustments for investing or financing activities		
Movement in value of investment property	65	(35)
Interest payable	5,660	8,815
Interest receivable	(150)	(65)
Net cash generated from operating activities	52,324	(4,811)

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

29. Capital commitments	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000

Capital expenditure contracted for but not provided for in the financial statements	<u>1,546</u>	<u>9,368</u>
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Capital expenditure authorised but not yet contracted for	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
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These commitments are to be financed by the receipt of social housing grant and a mixture of loan finance, reserves and proceeds from the sales of housing properties as follows

Social housing grant	497	2,925
Loans and reserves	<u>1,049</u>	<u>6,443</u>
	<u>1,546</u>	<u>9,368</u>

30. Grant and financial assistance

The total accumulated government grant and financial assistance received or receivable at 31 March was as follows

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Held as deferred capital grant	19,063	11,281
Recognised as income in Statement of Comprehensive Income	<u>16,456</u>	<u>16,330</u>
	<u>35,519</u>	<u>27,611</u>

31. Sale of properties not developed for outright sale and other fixed assets

	Proceeds of sales £'000	Cost of sales £'000	Surplus £'000	Capital grant recycled £'000
Further tranches of shared ownership	545	(557)	(12)	85
Right to buy	970	(939)	31	-
Right to acquire	383	(38)	345	-
Other property disposals	5,601	(987)	4,614	-
Other fixed asset disposals	3	-	3	-
Total 2024	<u>7,502</u>	<u>(2,521)</u>	<u>4,981</u>	<u>85</u>
Total 2023	<u>22,613</u>	<u>(17,116)</u>	<u>5,497</u>	<u>83</u>

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

32. Related party transactions

Bromford Housing Group Limited and its subsidiaries has indemnified its board members, executive team, directors and employees for insurance cover no longer provided within its current directors' and officers' liability insurance for the year ending 31 March 2024. The maximum exposure across the Group for this indemnity is £10 million and expires on 31 March 2025. This is described in more detail in note 34.

33. Pension obligations

During the year the Association participated in one defined benefit scheme, the Avon pension fund (LGPS), which is a multi-employer defined benefit scheme.

The Association also participates in the Royal London Defined Contribution scheme and The Pension Trust defined contribution scheme.

Further details of pension obligations are given under each scheme below.

Summary of Pension Schemes balances

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Creditors due less than one year		
Royal London DC scheme	(15)	(16)
Provisions for Pensions		
Avon pension fund (LGPS)	(5,052)	(151)

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

Avon Pension Fund

The Avon Pension Fund (APF) is a multi-employer defined benefit scheme administered by Bath and North East Somerset Council under the regulations governing the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The latest triennial actuarial valuation was carried out at 31 March 2022 and this has been updated to 31 March 2024 by a qualified independent actuary.

Contributions for year ended 31 March 2024:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Employee	88	108
Employer	1,654	504
Total	1,742	612
Agreed contribution rates for future years:		
Employee (average)	6.7%	6.7%
Employer	21% – 32.8%	21% – 32.8%

Principal actuarial assumptions

The following information is based upon a full actuarial valuation of the fund at 31 March 2022 updated to 31 March 2024 by a qualified independent actuary:

	2024	2023
Rate of inflation - CPI	3.10%	2.80%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment	3.10%	2.80%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.10%	2.80%
Discount rate for scheme liabilities	4.95%	4.80%

The post retirement mortality assumptions used to value the benefit obligation for the four years are based on the S3PA CMI 2022 cohort series. The assumed life expectations on retirement at age 65 are:

	2024	2023
Males		
Current pensioners (years)	23.1	21.5
Future pensioners retiring in 20 years (years)	25.3	22.5
Females		
Current pensioners (years)	25.1	23.9
Future pensioners retiring in 20 years (years)	28.0	25.1

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

The information below is in respect of the whole of the plans for which the Group is either the sponsoring employer or has been allocated a share of cost under an agreed policy throughout the periods shown:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Fair Value of fund assets	43,217	43,271
Present value of defined benefits obligations	(48,269)	(43,422)
Pension deficit	(5,052)	(151)

The fair value of the assets:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Other bonds	43,217	43,271
Total fair value of assets	43,217	43,271

Reconciliation of assets and liabilities

Reconciliation of assets at 31 March 2024:

	£'000
Assets at start of period	43,271
Interest on plan assets	2,085
Re-measurements	(2,466)
Administration expenses	(8)
Employer contributions paid	1,654
Employee contributions	88
Benefits paid	(1,407)
Assets at end of period	43,217
Total return on plan assets 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	0.9%

Merlin Housing Society Limited

**Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

Reconciliation of liabilities at 31 March 2024:

	£'000
Liabilities at start of period	43,422
Service Cost	267
Interest Cost	2,053
Employee contributions	88
Re-measurements	3,846
Benefits Paid	(1,407)
Liabilities at end of period	48,269

Analysis of the amount charged to operating costs in the Statement of Comprehensive Income at 31 March 2024:

	£'000
Employer service cost (net of employee contributions)	267
Expenses (including service charge and curtailments)	8
Total operating charge	275
Analysis of pension finance (income)/costs	
Expected return on pension scheme assets	(2,085)
Interest on pension liabilities	2,053
Amounts credited to financing costs	(32)

Analysis of gains and losses recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income at 31 March 2024:

	£'000
Actuarial losses on pension scheme assets	(2,466)
Actuarial losses on pension scheme liabilities	(3,846)
Actuarial losses recognised	(6,312)

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024

Movement in deficit during the year:

	£'000
Deficit in scheme at 1 April 2023	(151)
Employer service cost (net of employee contributions)	(267)
Employer contributions paid	1,654
Pension administration expenses	(8)
Net interest credit	32
Remeasurements	(6,312)
Deficit in scheme at 31 March 2024	(5,052)

The notes below are taken from a report prepared by Mercer Limited, the actuaries for the Avon LGPS fund.

Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) Equalisation

UK and European law requires pension schemes to provide equal benefits to men and women in respect of service after 17 May 1990 (the date of the “Barber” judgment) and this includes providing equal benefits accrued from that date to reflect the differences in GMPs. Previously, there was no consensus or legislative guidance as to how this might be achieved in practice for ongoing schemes, until the 26 October 2018 Lloyds Bank court judgement provided further clarity in this area. For the public service pension schemes, HM Treasury had already launched a consultation on the issues surrounding GMP equality and increases on GMPs and HM Treasury has stated since the judgement that “public sector schemes already have a method to equalise guaranteed minimum pension benefits, which is why there is no change to the existing method as a result of this judgment”.

The clear implication is that the Government (who have the overall power to determine benefits provision) believe the judgement itself will not affect the benefits. Therefore the natural conclusion for the main public service pension schemes including the Local Government Pension Scheme is that it is not appropriate for any provision to be included for the effect of the Lloyds Bank judgment, at least at the present time and so, unless instructed otherwise, no allowance was made specifically for GMP equalisation in the accounting liabilities. This is consistent with previous accounting disclosures (and the most recent valuation, which holds no explicit reserve for GMP equalisation).

There is a possibility that all public sector schemes will be required to index-link GMP benefits in respect of those members who reach their State Pension Age after April 2024. Government policy in this area is still to be determined, thus it was concluded that the most consistent/safest approach is to include the additional indexation liabilities in the accounting figures, therefore the figures above include the increase in past service liabilities as a “past service cost” (the schedule of figures will separately identify the element of the past service cost which relates to the GMP increases).

Merlin Housing Society Limited

Notes to the Financial Statements For the year ended 31 March 2024

34. Contingent liability

A deed has been entered into by the board Members of Bromford Housing Group Limited to indemnify its board members, executive team, directors and employees across Bromford Housing Group Limited and its subsidiaries for insurance cover no longer provided within its current directors' and officers' liability insurance policy. Any claim made would be against the relevant entity with ultimate responsibility for reimbursement being through Bromford Housing Group Limited where required. The maximum exposure across the Group for this indemnity is £10 million and it expires on 31 March 2025.

35. Bromford Housing Group Limited

The company's ultimate parent organisation is Bromford Housing Group Limited registered in England and Wales under the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (Registered Society Number 29996R).

The results of Merlin Housing Society Limited are included in the results of Bromford Housing Group Limited.

Copies of the Group financial statements for Bromford Housing Group Limited are available from the website, www.bromford.co.uk.