



# 19/20

## ANNUAL REPORT

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# FOREWORD



## Chair of the Board

*Dr Simon Cupples*

I was very pleased to have been appointed Chair of the Unitas Management Board in January 2020, having been a Board member since the company's inception in 2018. The business has gone from strength to strength in this time and 2019-20 has been particularly rewarding and this Annual Report will help to evidence our progress.

The Management Board is fully committed to ensuring Unitas continues to be a high-performing repairs and maintenance company, delivering a quality service to all its customers. We are extremely proud of the strong community focus that we have built and will use our knowledge and experience to create a positive local impact.

We are well on the way to achieving our strategic priorities, one of which includes understanding our asset base and our recent investment in a new IT system has enabled us to offer an improved and streamlined service. We have completed another successful year of planned investment, improving council homes to the value of £19.1m, in accordance with the asset requirement and we have focused on adding local social value by committing to the aims and objectives set out in our Corporate Social Value plan.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to offer my thanks to everyone who has been involved during the past twelve months including staff, residents and stakeholders, in helping to make Unitas the thriving business that it now is and I very much look forward to seeing its continued growth throughout the coming year.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S Cupples'.



## Director of Unitas

*Wayne Booth*

I started my role as Director of Unitas in June 2020 and it has been great to see the excellent work undertaken and hear of the many achievements during 2019/2020. I would like to begin by thanking my predecessor Steve Wilson who played a key role in overseeing the operations of the business during this time.

Unitas is rooted at the heart of Stoke-on-Trent, boasting an excellent repairs and maintenance service and a robust planned investment programme, as well as its engagement with many local-based projects.

We understand the importance of getting our services right to enhance the quality of people's lives and their environments. Key to this is professional, committed and knowledgeable staff combined with excellent communication. As well as investing in the learning and development of our employees, we have purchased the latest Dynamic Resource Scheduling system and IT technology which will be rolled out during 2020-21 and will ensure Unitas delivers a first-class service to the city's residents and service users.

This Report sets out Unitas' performance over the last year and the service that our residents can expect from us. We report here on our repairs work, planned investment, corporate social value, health and safety, procurement and customer feedback.

This is a very strong foundation on which to build going forward and I will be very proud to continue to lead on the great work achieved so far.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W Booth'.



## Our Vision Statement

To create a positive local impact and provide opportunities within the communities that we operate.



## Our Mission Statement

To maintain and improve our homes and properties through planned investment and efficient maintenance.



# OVERVIEW

**Unitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd is a company set up in 2018 by Stoke-on-Trent City Council to deliver property services to all Council housing in Stoke-on-Trent.**

We have 17,887 homes along with a portfolio of around 600 public buildings, shopping parades, garage sites and open plan land.

The company is wholly owned by Stoke-on-Trent City Council but has operational independence. Whilst strategic decisions about policies to manage the housing stock are made by the Council, we have developed our own complementary policies and procedures within the council framework and within the guidance provided by central government.

Day to day management is headed by the Director who is assisted by a Senior Leadership Team consisting of five Heads of Service. Unitas employs around 450 staff.

Services are organised into 5 business areas which are: Asset Management, Planned Works, Responsive Repairs, Governance, Policy & Performance and Finance.

Our customers have a diverse range of needs and we have recognised that our services need to be shaped to allow equal access to all. To help us achieve this we work with colleagues in housing services to establish an accurate customer profile. This information helps us to develop and deliver our services based on the needs of our customers.

### **Following a successful first year we promised...**

To build on the success of the first year of Unitas and to make it a great place to work, maintaining high levels of staff retention. This report details our successes in our second year in operation:

# MEET THE BOARD



## **Dr Simon Cupples**

*Chairman*

Simon is an accomplished Senior Executive Director with 30 years of international experience, primarily in the downstream oil and chemical sectors. Simon has a doctorate in Applied Chemistry and Mechanical and Production Engineering from De Montfort University, Leicester, and has also studied at Kellogg Business School in the USA.

With executive board experience in the UK, Ireland and Germany Simon has led the strategic and operational development of business from €40 million to \$1.5 billion, leading diverse international teams of up to 400 people. During his career Simon has been responsible for the development of commercial, technical and marketing partnerships between some of the world's biggest brands including Castrol, BP, BMW, Ford Europe, Jaguar Land Rover, Volvo, Aston Martin and Triumph Motorcycles.

Simon was born in Birmingham and has lived in several UK and international locations through his career before moving to Stoke-on-Trent in 2014.



## **Carl Brazier**

*Director of Housing and Customer Services*

Carl is the Director of Housing and Customer Services at Stoke-on-Trent City Council, with responsibility for all housing functions including the management of over 18000 homes, ASB, community support and customer services such as IT, libraries, museums, culture, local centres and the council contact centre. A key role he is leading is housing growth across the city through a unique housing offer of various forms of development and regeneration with support from Homes England, MHCLG, developers and financial institutions.

Carl has led the formation of Unitas as well as the council's development company, Fortior homes.

The council has also been awarded Housing Zone Status by the government and became the first council to be assessed by the Housing and Finance Institute (HFI) as Housing Business Ready.

Carl is a non-executive Director of First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO), sits on the LGA Housing Officer Finance Group, the MHCLG Housing Technical Group, HFI Housing Accelerators' Forum and was also an expert advisor for the Government's Elphicke /House Report. Carl was recently listed in Inside Housing in the Who's Who in local authority housing development for a second year in succession.

Carl is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).



## **Councillor Joanne Powell-Beckett**

*Councillor*

Councillor Joanne Powell-Beckett was first elected as a Stoke-on-Trent City Councillor in 2008. In 2015 she was elected to represent the ward of Sneyd Green and, following the local elections in May 2019, she became the Cabinet Member for Housing in the newly formed Conservative/City Independent Coalition. Councillor Joanne Powell-Beckett has previously been Chair of the city council's Audit Committee, Cabinet Support to the previous two city council leaders as well as a member of the Fire Authority. She is community focused, meeting regularly with resident and community groups as well as being Chair of the board of Governors at her local primary school.

# MEET THE BOARD



## **Councillor Ann James**

*Councillor*

Councillor James was first elected as a councillor in 1999 (representing the ward of Great Chell and Packmoor) and served on the city council until 2010, with a one-year break before being re-elected in 2011. For the period May 2018 to May 2019, she was Leader of the city council. Following the local elections in May 2019, and the formation of a new Conservative/City Independent Coalition, she became Deputy Leader. During her time as an elected member, she has been involved in both children and adult social care services, and is currently Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care. She is very community-focussed and active in her ward, regularly meeting with Local Residents Associations and communities in her ward.



## **Nic Cox**

*Non Executive Director*

The early years of Nic's career were founded in the construction industry, gaining a HND in construction and MCIQB in his early 20's. Experience gained centred on social housing and private sector new build.

In 1980 Nic joined Manchester City Council managing the maintenance and programme works for 15000 properties. His local government experience grew with roles at Wigan Council and Stockport Council.

In 2006 Nic became the Managing Director to the newly launched Solutions SK Ltd., a Stockport Council trading company delivering services including highways, street lighting, property maintenance, grounds maintenance, catering, cleaning, security and in 2007 waste and recycling services.

Taking retirement in 2013 Nic formed his own company supplying support and consultancy to local government working with APSE, Wakefield Council, Southend Council, Cheshire East Council - ANSA Ltd., Orbitas Ltd and TSS Ltd and Peterborough City Council. He also offer mentoring and coaching to senior managers and Boards. Nic is a Trustee for Stepping Stones Project, Rochdale, a charity supporting young people exiting the care service at 16.

Nic is delighted to have been appointed to the Uitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd Board and look forward to helping the Board and Company thrive in the future.

**Proud to be part  
of Stoke-on-Trent**

# THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

Secured over  
**£133,000**  
in Social Value Contribution



Successfully utilised  
**drone technology**  
to assess buildings and repairs



Carried out  
**97,000**  
responsive repairs

## Shortlisted

for the **DLO of the Year**  
for the UK Housing Awards

**Employee wellbeing**  
is vital to Unitas' success.  
Our annual wellbeing survey  
showed that **84%** of the  
workforce would recommend  
Unitas as a **good employer**.

Carried out  
**6,792**  
out of hours repairs



We delivered  
**£19.1 million**  
planned investment works



Became a Member of the  
**Parliamentary Review**  
being nationally recognised as an  
**"innovator of Industry"**



Celebrated over  
**2 million hours**  
of accident free work on site

# ASSET MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT

**We have completed another year of successful planned investment, improving council homes to the value of £19.1 million, in accordance with the asset requirement.**

This work has included new roofs, kitchens, bathrooms, and environmental improvements such as landscaping and parking solutions and improving energy efficiency by fitting external wall insulation. We have continued to appraise a wide range of different property types to assess and determine where to invest in the future. Option appraisals have either been completed or are underway in relation to high rise flats, shops and garages.



## COMPLIANCE

**We provide business planning and support services to ensure that the compliance function operates efficiently and effectively, this has enabled us to ensure a fully compliant housing stock with 100% of residential properties having valid gas and electrical certificates.**

**100%**  
**of Landlord**  
Gas Safety Record's  
issued within anniversary date  
**between April 2019**  
**to March 2020**



**100%**

electrical test certificates  
less than 10 years old

**Just 1**  
**Water Hygiene**  
reported incident  
in a 12 month period

## FIRE SAFETY

£3.05million was spent on Fire Safety works in 2019-20 across our high, medium and low rise apartment blocks in the City. This work, which was identified in our Fire Risk Assessment included:

- Installation of Fire Sprinkler systems
- Fire stopping works, to include fire rated collars and dampers
- Enhanced LD2 smoke alarms
- Internal and external fire doors
- Automatic opening vents
- Fire rated glazing
- Installation of fire rated electrical meter boxes
- Evacuation chairs



# PLANNED WORKS

Our capital investment programme is based upon findings by the asset management team.

The investment programme not only improves the stock but also gives balance of maintenance spend from responsive repairs towards a more cost effective planned maintenance service. Over the last year Unitas has carried out a range of works to the total value of £19.1 million.



## Public buildings

Unitas also maintains public buildings on behalf of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and during 2019/2020 we have carried out a range of works to 600 plus buildings across the city. The budget spend on this service has been in the region of £4 million, this has enabled both responsive repairs and preventive maintenance to be completed.

Restoration to Etruria Bone Mill  
a city landmark  
**£120,000**  
of works carried out at  
the bone and flint mill

## Energy Efficiency Measures



**£1,855,000**

spent on a **large number of properties** who received external wall insulation, doors, windows, and loft insulation.

## Estate works

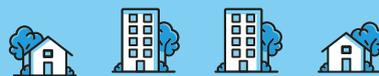
Some of this work included:

**£3 million**

has been spent during 19/20 on various **estate works**

## Over £6 million

spent on remodelling apartments, **improving communal areas** & carrying out fire safety works



Multiple garage site & estates across the city had **improvements works** to the value of **£3,000,000** spent on them



**Over £6,000,000**

spent to ensure decency, to include the installation of **more than 800 new boilers** and full central heating systems



## Environmental Works

**£1,032,000**

spent on landscaping across **Meir, and parking schemes at Fegg Hayes, Sneyd Green and Bucknall.**

# REPAIRS AND VOIDS

Unitas provides a high quality customer focused repairs and maintenance service.

The main features of our modern repair service includes a call centre using a opti-timed diagnostic appointment timed IT system, Freephone telephone number, an enhanced appointment system, multi-skilled operatives and an extensive fleet of vehicles. We have a dedicated voids team who ensure all empty homes are brought up to the agreed lettable property standard as endorsed by the City Council.

Total responsive repairs completed during 2019-20

**96,966**

including 6,792 of out of hours repairs

Continued to offer a **high quality** void property repairs service without compromising on turnaround time.

Average wait time for calls to be answered

**00:02:42**

Number of calls received during 2019-20

**85,669**



## Implemented Servitor and Kirona Dynamic Resource Scheduling (DRS)

DRS allow the workforce to receive jobs directly to their mobile device and plans their work based on their geographical location.

## Voids Fitted:

New Kitchens	<b>194</b>
New Bathrooms	<b>47</b>
New External Doors	<b>44</b>

## Responsive repairs fitted:

New Kitchens	<b>118</b>
New Bathrooms	<b>46</b>
New External Doors	<b>399</b>

## Fire Safety Responsive Repairs:

Fitment of new external front fire doors	<b>3</b>
Fire damage property repairs	<b>6</b>
Repairs to fire doors	<b>606</b>
Replacement fire doors	<b>57</b>



Average satisfaction with Unitas' Repairs service

**95.7%**

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) puts duties on employers, the self-employed and people in control of work premises (the Responsible Person) to report certain serious workplace accidents, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences (near misses).

We have a duty to report these and we are pleased to report that our impeccable health and safety record has remained.

## Our impeccable health and safety record has remained.

The total number of hours worked without a Reportable Injury Accident is over 2million hours:

# 2,084,100 hours

Our yearly number of Reportable Accidents is:

# 0

## Inspection Targets April 2019 - March 2020

The Unitas Monitoring, Inspection and Audit Standard sets out the pro-active approach and targets to ensure that risks are being managed effectively. The standard sets targets for the Unitas Board, Senior Leadership Team, Managers, Operational Team Leaders, Health & Safety Team and Trade Unions.

During the 12 months from April 2019 to March 2020 Unitas carried out 107% of the targeted inspections. The numbers of inspections during March 2020 were slightly below target due to the Covid-19 lockdown. This pro-active approach is an important and significant aspect to achieving the excellent safety, health and environmental results over the year.



	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of completed inspections for the business in 2019	205	244	168	232	198	190	120
Target for the month	167	167	167	167	167	167	167

	Jan	Feb	Mar
No of completed inspections for the business in 2020	195	171	154
Target for the month	167	167	167



# PROCUREMENT

**We have a procurement strategy in place to enable us to deliver the capital and investment works on time and in budget.**

Value for money is underpinned by the key performance indicators that we use. We measure the outturn and customer satisfaction which contribute to local supplier management and delivery of value for money.

Outcome of tenders to 2019-2020						
	Stoke-on-Trent		Stoke-on Trent & Staffordshire		National	
	%	Value	%	Value	%	Value
Planned Non-Framework (open market)	62.22%	£5,109,338.17	66.98%	£5,500,539.86	33.02%	£2,711,697.46
Framework - Labour only	79.22%	£1,129,070.00	91.95%	£1,310,510.00	8.05%	£114,700.00
Framework - Planned works	100.00%	£2,000.00	100.00%	£2,000.00	0.00%	£0.00
Framework - Specialist works	9.20%	£100,763.32	35.44%	£387,937.55	64.56%	£706,807.93



We will continue to maintain an effective procurement service and we plan to start procuring works in October 2020 for the next financial year.

# CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Unitas is committed to being responsible in respect of its social, environmental and economic responsibilities.**

Throughout this year our CSR commitment has become evident through the engagement we have had with local schools, churches, groups, and charities which we have worked with to deliver a number of community based projects across the city.

## Projects

Over the year, Unitas, alongside its suppliers and contractors have carried out an extensive range of projects to include:

- Working with Blurton in Bloom and two local schools to provide an orchard and sensory garden at a local church.
- Hosting an environment themed workshop for pupils from Northwood Broom Academy.
- Working with one of our contractors to supply and fit four sets of exit doors to a local boxing club.
- Working in partnership with one of our suppliers to provide paint and materials to improve a hall at a local community centre.
- Organising fire risk assessment to be carried out a local church alongside the fitment of fire safety equipment.

## Helping Hands Fund

The Helping Hands Fund has been set up to invest and empower our residents and the local communities we work in to create a positive impact. The fund is made up from money received from weighing in scrap metal and any fundraising events we hold. Local people, community groups and charities can apply for funding to help make a change in their local area. Throughout this year successful applications have included:

- Sponsorship of local charity events
- Provision of sports kits for local youth football teams
- Kitchen trailer for a local scout group



## Fundraising

Unitas raised **£2,398** for local charities in 2019/20. This has included:

Douglas Macmillan Hospice

**£1,215**

The Donna Louise Trust

**£895**

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

**£188**

Royal British Legion

**£100**

Over the last **12 months**  
we have secured  
**£133,891**  
of social value contribution

# CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Unitas encourages all feedback about our services. We also welcome comments and compliments. We are committed to:

- Dealing with complaints, comments and compliments quickly and effectively.
- Using complaints, comments and compliments to review and improve our services.

Our target in dealing with Stage 1 complaints is 10 days:

19/20	Resolved	%
0-5 days	334	32%
6-10 days	580	55%
11-15 days	47	5%
16+ days	43	4%
Withdrawn	45	4%

Unitas offers a robust complaints process for our customers. Stage 1 complaints refer to any initial complaints from our customers and we aim to respond within 10 working days. Stage 2 complaints allow customers to take their complaint further if they are unhappy with the result of their stage 1 complaint.

We aim to reach a decision within 20 working days. If customers are still dissatisfied at the end of both these processes they can take the matter further with the Tenants Complaint Board or Housing Ombudsman.

We monitor our performance on a monthly basis identifying what complaints are coming through and ensuring we are responding within our timescales.



Average satisfaction with Unitas' Repairs service

**95.7%**

**1,049**

**Stage 1 complaints**

for our planned works, responsive repairs and service delays

**64**

**damage claims**

were upheld/partly upheld last year totalling

**£6,933**

paid out, averaging **£108 per claim**

**193**

**compliments** for our planned and responsive services

**13**

**Stage 2 complaints**

for our planned works, responsive repairs and service delays

# FUTURE PLANS

## What we want to achieve in 2020/21...

Unitas is committed to resolving property repairs quickly and efficiently therefore we have invested in a new portal that allows our customers to report their repairs online and select an appointment date and time that is convenient for them. The portal is accessible 24/7 and means that customers don't have to call our contact centre.

### Asset Management & Planned Works Delivery

Full implementation of **Civica Keystone** asset management system.

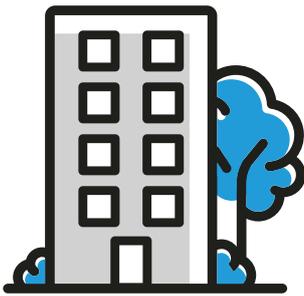


**Install 800** new full central heating systems.

### Repairs and Voids



**Fully embed Servitor and Kirona DRS** into the delivery of the repairs service.



**Remodel a further 22** high rise apartments in **2020/21**.

**Install 4 sprinkler systems** within 4 high rise blocks.

Deliver **new door entry systems** and new entrance doors within **various blocks**.

**Delivery of area based responsive repairs** to tackle neighbourhoods where there is the **highest demand for repairs**.



Ensure that the **service** provided by Unitas is **customer focussed** and develop new ways of **engaging with customers** to gain feedback on **responsive repairs service**.

Maintain a **rolling 5 year** investment programme which will see **£25.2million**

planned capital investment in the housing stock in **2020/21** including estate based investment and single component replacement schemes.



Ensure that we continue to deliver **a fully compliant housing stock** in relation to gas servicing, electrical testing, asbestos, water hygiene and fire safety.

Redevelopment of the **Unitas website** to provide **improved** customer experience and **increase** the number of customers reporting repairs **through the website**.



We are passionate  
about making a  
**POSITIVE**  
difference to our  
**community**