



i4B Holdings Limited

2023/24 Business Plan

i4B Holdings Ltd 2023-24 Business Plan

1. Introduction

- 1.1. i4B Holdings Ltd (i4B; the Company) was established to reduce homelessness, provide affordable, good quality homes, and invest to deliver regeneration and financial benefits for its sole shareholder, Brent Council (the Council).
- 1.2. The following document is i4B's 2023-24 Business Plan. The Business Plan outlines how the Company will grow and diversify its products and increase its contribution to the Council's ambition of creating a borough with "a future built for everyone, an economy fit for all".
- 1.3. The Business Plan takes the following format:
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2. Purpose of the Company

- 2.1. Between 2010 and 2015, homelessness doubled in Brent. This growth in homelessness was driven by the loss of private rented sector (PRS) tenancies due to affordability issues.
- 2.2. As a response to this challenge, on 14 March 2016, Brent Council's Cabinet approved the Council's Temporary Accommodation (TA) Reform Plan. The plan proposed that the Council set up a private company to acquire a large portfolio of affordable PRS accommodation for letting to homeless households.
- 2.3. In November 2016, Cabinet agreed to establish its wholly owned investment company, i4B Holdings Ltd. The Company was set up with the purpose of acquiring, letting, and managing a portfolio of affordable, good quality PRS properties. Properties would be let to homeless families at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels. This would enable the Council to either prevent or discharge its homelessness duty and therefore reduce TA costs.
- 2.4. The Company was allocated an initial PRS phase one loan of £109m to purchase 300 units of private rented sector accommodation by September 2019. The 2018-19 business plan increased this target to 600 units and allocated additional PRS phase two funding of £110.5m. However, this target has been impacted by current interest rates which means that after the remaining loan funding has been spent it is unlikely that i4B will be able to acquire properties. The Company's core business plan still anticipates a financial breakeven position over 30 years.
- 2.5. The Company is set up with the following requirements:
 - The Company has discretion over the individual properties it acquires provided that:
 - They are in a suitable location for the Council to comply with its duty under the Homelessness Suitability of Accommodation Order of 2011;
 - They are within the affordability criteria set out in the Company investment plan and Capital financing agreement with the Council; and
 - The rental income will be broadly equivalent to the relevant Local Housing Allowance.
 - The Board of i4B has limited discretion to let properties at discounted market rents, higher than LHA rates, where this is affordable for the tenant household and provides additional funding stability for the Company. The total mix of properties that may be let at greater than LHA rates is 25% of the portfolio, which may be flexed by prior agreement with the shareholder.

3. Performance against Overall Purpose

- 3.1. Since 2016, i4B has performed well against its purpose. i4B has purchased PRS accommodation and let it to families in TA. i4B has also brought financial savings to the Council.
- 3.2. As of January 2023, i4B has purchased 391 private sector homes and switched the tenure to an affordable PRS product. All properties have been refurbished to a high standard. Table One provides a breakdown of i4B's portfolio and pipeline as of January 2023.

Table One – i4B portfolio as of January 2023

	1b	2b	3b	4b+	All
Purchased properties	47	164	129	51	391

- 3.3. i4B has housed 404 families and 930 children. The majority of these families were previously housed in stage one TA. The number of families housed is higher than i4B's PRS portfolio due to certain properties being re-let.

Table Two – Breakdown of families accommodated by i4B as of December 2022

Previous Accommodation	no. of families	no. of children
Direct to i4B	99	206
Women's Refuge	2	15
TA Stage one – B&B	267	600
TA Stage two – Leased	36	109
Total	404	930

- 3.4. i4B also owns a 153-unit block which is let to public sector key workers; the building has now been operational for two years.
- 3.5. The Council receives financial benefits from i4B, mainly through reducing the use of TA. i4B brings a gross annual benefit of £1.784 million to the Council. This saving will increase as purchases increase.
- 3.6. The Council has also received the following one-off financial benefits:
- PRS phase one loan: loan arrangement fee of £872k and non-utilisation charge of £330k
 - PRS phase two loan: loan arrangement fee of £884k and non-utilisation charge of £408k

4. Progress against the Company's 2022-23 Business Plan

4.1. The medium- to long-term objectives of Brent's Housing Companies are:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough;
- Running a viable business;
- Delivering safe and sustainable homes; and
- Providing a consistently good housing service.

4.2. This section outlines performance in 2022-23 against each of the Company's strategic objectives.

4.3. Summary of performance

4.3.1. During 2022-23 i4B has implemented the housing companies' Development Strategy, agreed alongside the 2022-23 Business Plan. The strategy outlined how i4B and First Wave Housing would seek to utilise remaining and potential future funding in order to increase the Council's affordable housing offer. This has, however, been impacted by the economic environment. Inflation is at its highest rate in the UK for over 40 years, which has led to increased interest rates.

4.3.2. i4B has price caps which represent the maximum amount the Company can pay in order for acquisitions to meet its financial viability criteria. Increased interest rates have reduced the amount i4B can pay for properties, meaning the Company is less able to be competitive on the market. As a result, i4B has not been able to purchase at its anticipated rate of 48 properties in the year. As of January 2023, the Company has purchased 21 properties, with a further 9 in the pipeline.

4.3.3. In response to this, i4B has drawn down loan funding at an affordable rate, and has held discussions on how to use this money. As part of this, the Company has reviewed a number of new build schemes, and has taken the decision to suspend new offers for street property acquisitions until purchasing becomes more viable. In the first months of the year, the Company will focus its efforts on exploring block purchases, and will regularly review the property market throughout 2023-24 with the view to re-enter the market during the year; this will be discussed further in the Strategic Priorities for 2023-24 in Section 6.

4.3.4. During 2022-23 i4B carried out a pilot scheme for purchasing adapted accommodation to meet demand from the Council. The pilot concluded that significant additional funding would be required to purchase adapted properties, and that even with additional funding supply in and around Brent is limited. Therefore, i4B is working with the Council to determine potential additional support for this purchasing stream.

4.3.5. Table Three below provides a summary of operational performance at December 2022:

Table Three – Summary of Performance

Indicator	Target	Performance at December 2021 (YTD)	Performance at January 2023 (YTD)
Number of units	418 by April 2023	PRS: 354 Key Worker: 153	PRS: 391 Key Worker: 153
Instruction to Legal to Purchase	120 days	132 days	147 days
Minor void re-let times	35 days	19 days	New purchases: 111 days Re-lets: 162 days
Major void re-let times	72 days	151 days	New purchases: 126 Re-lets: 206 days
Rent collection	98.50%	88.5%	BHM – 92.1% Mears – 90.5%
Void Rent Loss	1%	9%	5%*
Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours	100%	100%	97%
Urgent repairs completed within 7 days	95%	81%	80%
Routine repairs completed within 28 days	95%	91%	75%
% of properties with a valid gas safety certificate	100%	BHM – 99.57% Mears – 92.42%	BHM – 100% Mears – 95.2%

*figure is for December 2022 as this is reported on a bi-monthly basis

4.3.6. Void times and rent collection continue to be the major operational issues for i4B, with minor and major void times and rent collection rates all out of target. In order to address this, a void improvement project is being set up covering both the housing companies and the Council's Housing Revenue Account. Regarding rent collection, a dedicated Tenancy Sustainment Officer has been appointed for i4B to ensure that tenants are set up on the relevant benefits and are able to make regular rent payments. A wider project looking at tenancy sign-up, rent collection and arrears

management processes and systems is being set up to begin in early 2023.

4.3.7. The following paragraphs provide a more detailed update on progress against the sub-objectives for each Housing Company objective in the 2022-23 Business Plan.

4.4. Performance against strategic objectives

4.5. *Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough*

4.5.1. i4B acquires and lets properties in Brent and neighbouring boroughs to improve the Council's affordable housing offer. A Development Strategy for the Council's two housing companies, i4B and First Wave Housing, was agreed alongside the 2022-23 Business Plans with the aim of utilising remaining and potential future funding to develop a portfolio of affordable new build accommodation which:

- Supports the Council's Housing Strategy and relieves housing need;
- Supports the financial viability of the Companies; and
- Is feasible and realistic.

4.5.2. The strategy has been implemented during 2022-23. However, this has been and continues to be impacted by the current economic environment, principally higher global inflation rates driven by COVID supply chain issues and the war in Ukraine. In the UK, skills shortages and a tight labour market are adding to these pressures.

4.5.3. Inflation in the UK is at its highest for 40 years and this is a pattern being experienced more widely in the global economy. It is unclear how long inflation will remain at these levels, but it is likely to be a longer-term trend.

4.5.4. The Company's ongoing street property purchase programme has been significantly impacted by increased interest rates, which reduce the amount i4B can spend on new acquisitions. As of January 2023, i4B has purchased 21 properties in the financial year against an initial target of 48. Despite this, i4B has continued to purchase higher yielding properties.

4.5.5. In response to this, i4B has renegotiated its loan with the Council, meaning it can now borrow at the reduced 50-year PWLB rate. The Board has agreed to drawdown £40m of remaining loan funding. This has been drawn down at a rate of 3.45% at 50 years.

4.5.6. i4B now has £19.89m of remaining loan funding yet to be committed. Once this funding has been used, i4B would need to agree new loan funding at a new interest rate. Advice from the Council's Treasury team is that rates are likely to trend upwards in the future, negatively impacting the number of properties that meet i4B's viability criteria. The Board has agreed to a pause on committing any new loan funding, for example by making offers on properties. i4B has also appraised a number of new build schemes in 2022-23, although no suitable opportunities have materialised thus far. Exploring block acquisitions will be a priority for 2023-24, alongside regularly reviewing the street property market to review the viability of resuming street property purchases.

- 4.5.7. During the year i4B has also carried out a pilot of purchasing adaptable properties to meet high demand from homeless families requiring adapted accommodation. Additional funding of up to £100,000 per property was allocated to the pilot, but i4B's price caps have proven restrictive, especially as i4B primarily operates in the south of Brent where the majority of properties are flats and terraced houses and therefore not typically suitable for adaptation. Therefore, a large amount of additional funding would be required in order to make this a viable purchasing stream for i4B. Due to the significant amount of funding, the Council is now exploring alternative options for housing this Cohort; options involving i4B are being considered as part of this.
- 4.5.8. i4B's 153-unit block of key worker accommodation is now fully let, with a small number of void properties due to move-outs. Properties are let at 65% of market rent.
- 4.5.9. On 4 April 2022, 25 intermediate rented units were transferred from First Wave Housing to i4B as part of the transfer of Granville New Homes.

4.6. *Running a viable business*

- 4.6.1. The i4B Business Plan monitors and assures the ongoing financial viability of the Company. The key operational issues for i4B continue to be high void times and levels of arrears. There has been a lack of improvement in void times during 2022-23. In order to address this, a void improvement project is being set up, which covers both the housing companies and the Council's Housing Revenue Account, and is chaired by senior management.
- 4.6.2. i4B's rent collection rates are below target. Some reasons for this include delays in processing Universal Credit claims leading to build-up of arrears in the initial stages of a tenancy and the potential unaffordability of rents for some tenants; this has been further compounded by the ongoing cost of living crisis. To address this, a dedicated i4B Tenancy Sustainment Officer has been appointed. The officer's role is to ensure new tenants are set up on the correct benefits and begin making regular rent payments, and working with existing tenants in arrears to improve payment behaviours. In addition to this, a wider project to improve rent collection and reduce arrears is being set up. This will involve examining the sign-up process and the support offered to tenants, reviewing rent collection and arrears management processes, and reviewing i4B's highest arrears cases to consider ongoing tenant affordability and any necessary action including the allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant funding.
- 4.6.3. i4B has commissioned a programme of stock condition surveys. Initial results have been received, and the final report is expected in February 2023; this will be used to develop a long-term asset management strategy for the company.
- 4.6.4. Another key issue for i4B is value for money. A value for money strategy for i4B and First Wave Housing has been prepared and will be in place before the beginning of the 2023/24 financial year. In addition, i4B is working to commission a consultant to carry out a value for money review of voids and repairs. The results of this are expected back in early 2023-24.

4.7. *Delivering safe and sustainable homes*

- 4.7.1. During 2022-23, i4B commissioned an audit of its health and safety compliance arrangements, managed primarily through its Service Level Agreement with Brent Housing Management.
- 4.7.2. In response to the audit, a monitoring tracker has been produced that tracks all compliance elements for all i4B properties and blocks. All compliance certification is being located and saved in a central place. i4B has also initiated increased clienting of the compliance certification process to provide further assurance, and the results of the audit follow-up are due to be presented to the Board in early 2023.
- 4.7.3. As a longer-term approach to the monitoring and reporting of compliance, BHM have now procured the True Compliance system. True Compliance will allow BHM to manage all areas of compliance on one system including storage of certification, and the first area of compliance, gas safety, will go live in early 2023. i4B will track the implementation of True Compliance during 2023-24, and will continue its increased clienting and monitoring of health and safety compliance until True Compliance is fully embedded and regular reporting to the Board is in place.
- 4.7.4. In addition to this, a programme of updated compliance policies and procedures is being presented to the i4B Board. Gas and electrical safety policies have been signed off by the Board, with asbestos, legionella and fire safety policies due to be signed off by the end of 2022-23.
- 4.7.5. The decarbonisation of i4B's stock is set to be a major capital expense for the Company. During 2022/23, i4B commissioned a programme of stock condition and energy surveys, which outlined the requirements and estimated costs for bringing i4B properties up to an Energy Performance Certificate rating of B. The results of this work have been received, and i4B now have EPC data for all of its properties. A decarbonisation strategy for the Company will be developed during 2023/24, which will outline works that will be undertaken to improve performance. This may include stock rationalisation in some cases.
- 4.7.6. i4B has also applied for the Green Homes Grant, and the managing agent of the grant are working to book in surveys with tenants with the view to completing a programme of energy efficiency works at properties by the end of 2022-23, in order to improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of properties to at least a C.
- 4.8. *Providing a consistently good housing service*
 - 4.8.1. i4B aims to ensure tenant satisfaction and monitor this regularly. During 2022-23, some transactional tenant satisfaction data has been collected. However, no full survey of tenant satisfaction has been carried out.
 - 4.8.2. The Regulator of Social Housing has introduced a new suite of tenant satisfaction measures which will be in place from April 2023. While i4B is not regulated by the Regulator, it follows its standards in line with the approach of the Council's HRA and First Wave Housing. BHM are carrying out a pilot of the new surveys, and reporting to the i4B Board will begin from early 2023-24. In addition, i4B will look to improve its oversight of complaints and transactional satisfaction surveys in order to review tenant satisfaction and implement any actions to improve this.

5. Context for 2023-24 Business Plan

5.1. This section outlines the various contextual factors that have influenced the i4B Business Plan and how they influence the Company. These include, but are not limited to:

- Current economic context;
- The state of the housing market;
- Current demand and housing need within Brent;
- The regulatory environment;
- Net zero and climate change; and
- The key risks the Company currently faces.

5.2. These factors have influenced the proposals outlined in Section 6.

5.3. *Current Economic Context*

5.3.1 Inflation in the UK is at its highest for 20 years and this is a pattern being experienced more widely in the global economy. These higher global inflation rates have been driven by COVID supply chain issues and the war in Ukraine. In the UK, the impacts of Brexit, particularly skills shortages and a tight labour market, are adding to these pressures.

5.3.2 CPI is expected to remain over 10% in the short-term, and fall sharply from mid-2023. The ongoing cost of living crisis is also expected to reduce affordability for tenants and lead to impacts on rent collection.

5.3.3 Inflation is generally fairly positive at moderate levels for the i4B business plan. This is based on the assumption that rental income, which exceeds operating costs, increases at the same rate and that i4B's financing costs are fixed and are therefore eroded by inflation. The risk to i4B is that if rent levels are frozen, for example by capping the housing allowance (LHA) increases, whilst cost inflation rises. This will continue to be monitored closely.

5.4 *The Housing Market*

5.4.1 During this financial year, property prices have continued to rise and remain high, and this has led to a decrease in the amount i4B is able to pay for a property and a similar decrease in the amount of properties that meet i4B's financial viability criteria. As i4B is less competitive on the market, especially as demand in the borough

remains high, it has not been able to purchase at business plan assumptions in 2022-23.

- 5.4.2 It is expected that purchasing will continue to be difficult in early 2023-24, and as a result i4B has suspended its acquisition programme. It is anticipated that house prices will reduce throughout 2023. Forecast decreases in national house prices range from around 5% to 12%¹. For example, the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts a reduction of 9% between Q4 of 2022 and Q3 of 2024², while Savills anticipate a reduction of 10% nationally, and 12.5% in London³.
- 5.4.3 This reduction may represent an opportunity for i4B to re-enter the market in 2023-24, and this will be regularly reviewed throughout the year.

5.5 *Current Demand and Housing Need within Brent*

- 5.5.1 Since 2016, i4B has been housing Council homelessness nominees. The recent pressures on Housing Needs Service have been driven by increased demand from homeless households, a contraction of private rented sector (PRS) properties, and evictions from the PRS, which are linked to affordability issues, due to rising rents across London. Demand has continued to grow during 2022-23, leading to an increase in the use of Temporary Accommodation. There are currently 187 families living in TA, for 112 of which the Council has accepted the main homelessness duty. A table broken down by bed size is below:

Bed Size	Number of accepted families	Number of non-accepted families	Total
2	64	45	109
3	32	22	54
4+	16	8	24
Total	112	75	187

- 5.5.2 There continues to be increasing demand from families who require adapted properties due to mobility issues or disabilities. As of November 2022 there are 72 families requiring adapted properties, of whom 48 have no suitable offer of accommodation in the pipeline. Approximately five new families join this cohort each month.
- 5.5.3 The bespoke nature of i4B properties is one of the main benefits of the Company: therefore, i4B carried out a pilot scheme to review the feasibility of purchasing properties that are suitable to be used as adapted accommodation. The pilot showed

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/dec/26/experts-predict-housing-market-will-cool-in-2023-as-uk-enters-a-recession>

² <https://obr.uk/forecasts-in-depth/the-economy-forecast/housing-market/#houseprices>

³ <https://www.savills.co.uk/insight-and-opinion/research-consultancy/residential-market-forecasts.aspx>

that significant additional subsidy from the Council would be required to purchase a large number of adapted properties. The Council is currently reviewing its options regarding how to best house the cohort of families requiring adapted accommodation.

5.6 *The Regulatory Environment*

- 5.6.1 While i4B is not regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing, it aims to comply with its standards in line with requirements for the Council's HRA and First Wave Housing. The regulatory environment for housing is set to become increasingly stringent, with the introduction of new legislation such as the Building Safety Act and more proactive regulation in areas such as tenant satisfaction.
- 5.6.2 Alongside this, risk is increasing across the sector due to a combination of increased uncertainty in the operating environment (due to Brexit, Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine impacting supply chains and driving high inflation and costs), a rise in disrepair cases, and upcoming requirements in relation to building safety and decarbonisation. This has already led to a number of housing providers having their Governance and Viability ratings downgraded by the Regulator.
- 5.6.3 The Regulator's new tenant satisfaction measures will be effective from April 2023; i4B will follow these measures and will begin reporting on these to Board in early 2023-24. This forms part of a wider move towards more proactive regulation alongside the new Social Housing Regulation Bill, which will also offer new powers to the Regulator such as the ability to carry out inspections of and issue performance improvement plan notices to underperforming landlords.
- 5.6.4 Stock condition is another key theme. Alongside decarbonisation requirements discussed below, the sector is seeing a rise in disrepair cases and complaints to the Housing Ombudsman, principally in relation to property condition and damp and mould. In response, i4B will review and report on its disrepair cases, and develop a clear disrepair policy for such cases.
- 5.6.5 Finally, the new Building Safety Act will bring the introduction of a new Building Safety Regulator and a New Homes Ombudsman. The Act covers residential high-rise buildings at all stages from design and planning to construction and occupancy, and requires the provision of a 'golden thread' of detailed building information both to the Regulator and residents. It also introduces greater protections for leaseholders against historical defects as well as the requirement for a resident engagement strategy. The implications of the Act for i4B will be reviewed with BHM in advance of 2023-24, and a programme of work will be implemented to ensure compliance with the Act.

5.7 *Net Zero and Climate Change*

- 5.7.1 Brent Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and committed to do all reasonable in its gift to aim for carbon neutrality for 2030, and to work with government to achieve the national 2050 target. The target for Brent's housing in its Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy (2021-2030) is to achieve an average EPC rating of B by 2030, in line with the London Councils target. Brent Council's housing

companies' environmental sustainability targets are aligned with the Council's own environmental sustainability targets.

5.7.2 i4B has entered into a contract with the managing agent for the Green Homes Grant. The Grant offers funding for the installation of energy efficiency works at properties with an EPC rating of D or below. Around 20 properties have been or are due to be surveyed for inclusion in the scheme

5.7.3 Stock decarbonisation will be a significant capital expense for the Company. Modelling from the Green Homes Grant project shows an indicative average cost per property of £18,000 for reaching EPC C and £20,500 for reaching EPC B; this has the potential to increase with inflation.

5.8 *Risk Context*

5.8.1 The Company currently faces a number of risks. Key risks include:

- Poor data quality on asset management systems means compliance with H&S standards cannot be effectively monitored, resulting in i4B being non-compliant with its statutory obligations.
- i4B lacks the policies, knowledge and governance arrangements to effectively monitor regulatory and legal standards on compliance.
- Tenant non-payment of rent increases due to unaffordability of rent.
- High Capital Programme costs, including future climate change obligations, undermine the viability of the business plan.
- Greater uncertainty in the external operating environment brings greater risk to i4B's financial modelling.

5.8.2 At the current time there is considerable uncertainty around the prospects for a sustained period of high inflation and the consequences for interest rates, housing prices and rental affordability for tenants. The impacts of this are being closely monitored and modelled by the Board, and have led to the current pause on new street property purchases.

5.8.3 Mitigating measures are in place to help to minimise the impact of all risks. A copy of the full Company risk register has been included in Appendix 2.

6. Strategic Priorities for 2023-24

6.1. This section outlines the Company's strategic priorities for 2023-24. In 2023-24 i4B will seek to consolidate its position while reviewing development opportunities in the borough. Priorities for the year are set out within the framework of the medium- to long-term objectives of Brent's Housing Companies. These objectives are:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough;
- Running a viable business;
- Delivering safe and sustainable homes; and
Providing a consistently good housing service.

6.2 Increasing the supply of affordable housing in the borough

6.2.1 i4B's primary aim is to improve the Council's affordable housing offer through the acquisition and letting of properties in Brent and neighbouring boroughs. i4B has available finance and aims to ensure this is spent in a way that adds maximum value to the Council, whilst also being feasible and supporting the Company's financial viability. i4B has currently suspended new offers on street properties to focus on acquiring a new build scheme during 2023-24. During 2023-24, i4B will work with partners to appraise schemes, and will look to re-enter the market later in the year. The strategic priorities are as follows:

6.2.2 Priority 1: Explore future financing arrangements with Council

6.2.3 It is likely on any new build scheme i4B will have to make phased payments to a developer. i4B will therefore work with the council to explore financing arrangements that give it greater certainty over finance rates whilst minimising carry costs.

6.2.4 Priority 2: Review feasibility of a block acquisition

6.2.5 i4B will work with consultants to review the market for potential block acquisitions. These will review the number of live schemes against i4B's viability criteria, as well as site finding. As the Council is seeing greater demand from homelessness nominees with specific need for adapted units, this will also include adapted properties.

6.2.6 Priority 3: Review feasibility of new build purchases

6.2.7 As well as block acquisitions, i4B will also work with consultants to review the market for new build opportunities, aiming to identify viable options. As above, this will also include adapted properties.

6.2.8 The Council is looking to purchase 294 properties at Fulton Road, and has agreed heads of terms with the developer of the scheme. As part of the scheme, leasing 118 London Living Rent units to one of the housing companies is being explored. The Council is finalising arrangements with the GLA, and during the year the agreed company will look to agree heads of terms and enter into a lease agreement with the Council for the 118 units.

6.2.9 Priority 4: Review feasibility of re-entering street property market

6.2.10 In June 2023, i4B will review the feasibility of re-entering the street property market and, dependent on this review, may re-join the market. If the company does re-enter

the market, the company's acquisition criteria will be more restrictive; for example, i4B would avoid purchasing properties that do not meet energy performance requirements or properties in blocks with third party freeholders.

6.3 Running a Viable Business

6.3.1 This objective relates to improving the operational and financial performance of i4B in order to remain financially viable and thus continue to bring benefits to the Council. The Company's focus for 2023-24 will be on improving void times and rent collection rates, as well as implementing its value for money strategy to reduce costs and improve financial performance. The 2023-24 strategic priorities that relate to this objective are:

6.3.2 Priority 5: Carry out project to reduce arrears

6.3.3 During 2023-24 i4B will carry out a project alongside BHM to reduce arrears. This will include: allocating Homelessness Prevention Grant funding; reviewing the Company's sign-up process and tenancy sustainment approach; examining i4B's highest arrears cases to assess ongoing affordability and suitability for tenants; and reviewing rent collection and arrears management processes to identify efficiencies and improvements.

6.3.4 Priority 6: Implement VfM strategy

6.3.5 The value for money (VfM) strategy will be presented separately and will be in place before the beginning of 2023/24 financial year. This will outline how i4B defines VfM, how it will improve VfM, and plans for monitoring this. This process will involve setting specific VfM targets with service areas through the service level agreement (SLA) with the Council. During 2023-24, i4B will therefore begin the implementation of the action plan in the VfM strategy.

6.3.6 Priority 7: Reduce void costs

6.3.7 The Council are currently carrying out a void improvement project and an end-to-end review of voids processes. Voids will continue to be closely monitored by officers and at Board meetings during the financial year to review the impact of this.

6.3.8 Priority 8: Significantly improve void turnaround times

6.3.9 Alongside the void improvement project and review, which will include the introduction of a simplified voids process, i4B will work with BHM to take actions to significantly reduce void times.

6.3.10 Priority 9: Explore potential stock rationalisation

6.3.11 Following the completion of the energy modelling work, i4B will review the financial and energy performance of properties. Additionally, in 2023-24 i4B will consider the potential disposal of under-performing properties, as well as continuing to carry out other disposals as appropriate, including properties in Home Counties when they go void if they cannot meet immediate demand from Brent's Housing Needs teams. In such cases i4B will work with the Property Team to begin the disposal process.

6.4 Delivering Safe and Sustainable Homes

6.4.1 This objective involves ensuring that i4B's homes are of a good quality, safe, legally compliant, and environmentally sustainable. In 2023-24, the Company's focus will be on compliance through ensuring the development of necessary policies and the successful implementation of True Compliance. i4B will also seek to respond to the new Building Safety Act, requirements to improve the energy efficiency of its stock, and the ongoing rise in disrepair cases. The 2023-24 strategic priorities that relate to this objective are:

6.4.2 Priority 10: Monitor health and safety compliance

6.4.3 i4B will continue short-term monitoring and reporting of each compliance area, providing reassurance to the Board that the Company remains compliant with all relevant law. Additionally, i4B will monitor the implementation of the True Compliance system during 2023-24, ensuring all properties and certifications are uploaded to the system.

6.4.4 Priority 11: Implement plan in response to Building Safety Act

6.4.5 In 2023-24, i4B carry out a programme of work with BHM to ensure the Company complies with the newly introduced Building Safety Act.

6.4.6 Priority 12: Develop decarbonisation strategy

6.4.7 Following the completion of the energy modelling work, i4B will use the results to develop a decarbonisation strategy to ensure its stock reaches target Energy Performance Certificate levels, which may include stock rationalisation where appropriate.

6.4.8 Priority 13: Develop disrepair policy

6.4.9 To address the sector-wide rise in disrepair cases, i4B will develop a disrepair policy based on a review of its recent cases and work with BHM to implement this.

6.5 Providing a Consistently Good Housing Service

6.5.1 This objective relates to improving tenant satisfaction. While not regulated by the Regulator, i4B will review initial responses to the Regulator's new tenant satisfaction measures, and will seek to improve its oversight of complaints handling. The 2023-24 strategic priorities for this objective are:

6.5.2 Priority 14: Review tenant satisfaction

6.5.3 Following the implementation of new tenant satisfaction measures in April 2023, i4B will review initial results from these surveys as well as transactional feedback from its tenants to identify and carry out any necessary actions to improve tenant satisfaction. Regular reporting to the Board on tenant satisfaction will be introduced.

6.5.4 Priority 15: Improve complaints oversight and monitoring

6.5.5 Additionally, i4B will review its policies and management procedures for complaints and from this identify and implement any required process improvements.

Appendix 1 – Closed Appendix – Financial Analysis

Please refer to the i4B Closed Financial Appendix document.

Appendix 2 – Risk Register

See Appendix 2 of accompanying cover report.

Appendix 3 - 2023-24 Key Tasks

See Appendix 3 of accompanying cover report.

Appendix 4 – Partially Closed Appendix – 2023/25 SLA

See Appendix 4 of accompanying cover report.