watford community housing



Candidate Pack

Chair of Group Board/ Chair Designate

At Watford Community Housing we believe in working in partnership to transform our communities and change lives for the better.

Our business is evolving rapidly as we find new ways to deliver great homes, improved services and much-needed new housing for our customers.

And you could be part of our story...

Contents

Welcome from Chris Cheshire, current Chair of the Group Board

Our journey

Our vision & values

Role profile – Chair of Group Board/Chair Designate

Role profile – What we're looking for

Governance and Group structures

Meet the team

Remuneration

How to apply/key dates

Welcome



Thank you for your interest in joining Watford Community Housing's Group Board as its new Chair/Chair Designate.

Watford Community Housing is a Community Gateway housing association, which means we put people at the heart of our work and we're committed to delivering a consistently excellent customer experience, underpinned by high-quality services, and I've been immensely proud to serve as the Group Board's Chair over the past four years.

It's a particularly exciting time to join as the proposed merger between Watford Community Housing and Thrive Homes, if agreed, will create a new, larger Community Gateway organisation which is able to provide even more homes and better services for all of its customers, and the appointed Group Board will play a vital role in leading it into the future.

We want customers to feel good about every interaction with us, and inspired by the homes we provide and the communities we nurture. We're proud to have been one of the first housing providers to achieve a C1 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing under the new consumer standards and we will continue to deliver a consistently high-quality service under the new organisation.

The Group Board will play a critical role in monitoring our performance and ensuring we support our customers and act on their feedback. As part of our succession planning, we are now recruiting for a new Group Board Chair/Chair Designate for the new organisation, as I will be stepping down from my role as the current Chair.

This candidate pack includes information on the role, so please read it carefully to find out more about what it involves – I hope that after reading you will decide to apply.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Cheshire, Chair of the Group Board

Our journey

We've come a long way since our formation in 2007. We deliver a range of high-quality housing management and property services that our customers rely on. We are also a trusted partner to other organisations – we manage homes for other housing providers, we develop much-needed new homes both independently and in partnership, and we run community hubs that help people to get more out of life.

But we're just getting started – we have even bigger plans for the future.

We own and manage more than **7,700** homes and associated assets

We have more than **200** employees

We spend around **£10m** per year to maintain and improve our assets

V1/G1/C1
We have the highest ratings from the Regulator of Social Housing

We built **310** new homes in 2024/25



Our plans for the future
We launched our 2025-2030 business plan – Making a Difference – in early 2025, which set out our ambitious plans to provide even better services for our customers, and to embrace opportunities to grow. This a great time to come aboard as the proposed merger with Thrive Homes – if it is agreed – will allow you to join a vibrant, exciting new organisation and help to shape its future.

We are determined to keep building on our strong track record as the partner of choice for other local organisations, to deliver new homes and strengthen communities.

We're proud to be amongst the first to have achieved the highest rating – C1 – under the new consumer standards for social housing, and we remain committed to ongoing improvement. Providing good-quality services for our customers will be at the heart of our strategy for the future.

To read our 'Making a Difference' business plan and associated strategies click here.

Focused on South-West Hertfordshire
Although our roots are firmly in Watford, we now have a presence across seven local authority areas around South-West Hertfordshire, and in North-West London. By offering high-quality services to residents, we look to deliver friendlier communities that help to improve lives.

Putting people first
As a Community Gateway housing association, we put people at the heart of our work. Our customers are invited to become members, and staff, stakeholders and local residents can become associate members. Members have voting rights and are empowered to influence our work and play a central role in our decision-making.

Our vision

"Better homes, friendlier communities – together"

Our values

Professional

We are honest, open and respectful. People trust us to keep our promises.

Forward-thinking

We have a 'can-do' attitude and embrace opportunities to improve and innovate.

Collaborative

We work together as one team and build lasting partnerships to get results.



Diversity & inclusion

Just as we strive to make our communities friendly and open to everyone, we are committed to ensuring that we have a diverse and inclusive workforce who feel comfortable to be who they are in the workplace.

We have a dedicated *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion* group, that champions diversity and drives inclusion by removing barriers and helping us to build a vibrant culture.

Click here to find out more about our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Role profile:
Group Board Chair/Chair Designate

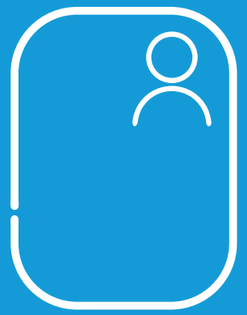
What's the role?

We are currently looking to recruit a new Chair of Group Board who will also be appointed as Chair Designate whilst we explore a merger with Thrive Homes. You'll use your expertise and experience to help set the overall strategic direction for the Group to ensure strong, robust leadership and governance. You will exercise direction and control in the interests of tenants and leaseholders, based on the Group's core values.

Please read the following information carefully to ensure you understand what the role involves.

Joining the Group Board

The Group Board is responsible for the overall control of the Group and the monitoring of its performance in delivering our growth agenda, as we strive to deliver much-needed social, affordable, and shared ownership homes in accordance with our status as a Community Gateway housing association.



Key responsibilities

- Acting as an ambassador for Watford Community Housing Group to support our profile and brand
- Ensuring the efficient conduct of the Group Board's business, and of the Group's General Membership Meetings
- Ensuring the Group Board adheres to high standards of corporate governance, in full compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements, including financial viability
- Ensuring that all Group Board members are given the opportunity to express their views and that appropriate standards of behaviour are maintained in accordance with the Code of Conduct approved by the Group Board
- Establishing a constructive working relationship with, and providing support for, the Chief Executive and Executive team
- Ensuring that the Group Board delegates sufficient authority to its committees/ working groups, the Chair, the Chief Executive and others, to enable the business of the organisation to be carried out effectively between meetings of the Group Board
- Ensuring that the Group receives professional advice when it is needed, either from the Senior Management Team or from external sources
- Ensuring that an effective relationship with the Gateway Membership Team and the Membership is fostered so that the views of the Membership are used to inform decision making
- Taking decisions which have been delegated to the Chair of the Group Board
- Ensuring decisions taken by the various Boards are for the best interests of that Board and that the legal responsibilities are met

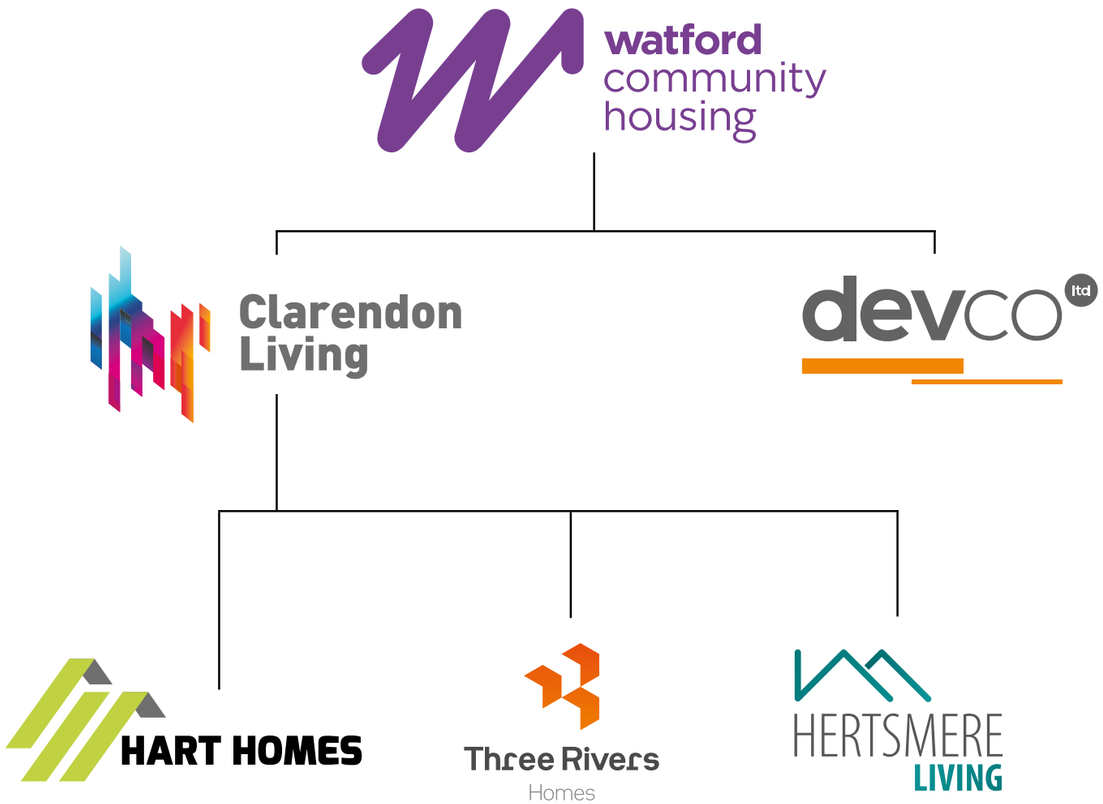
Role profile:

What we're looking for

As Chair of the Group Board, you will need the following skills:

- Experience of chairing a committee with the understanding of the complex, regulated environment of social housing
- Experience of mergers and acquisitions alongside a strong focus on good governance
- Understanding of the different roles of the non-executive and executive directors
- Excellent skills in participation and inclusion in meetings, to ensure effective decision-making on reports presented to the Group Board
- A positive and constructive approach to the role and a willingness to work as part of a team, with respect and tolerance for others
- Ability to represent and promote Watford Community Housing and the wider Group with other organisations and agencies
- Committed and adaptable, with sufficient time to undertake the role
- Attendance at no less than 85% of allocated meetings and associated activities
- Commitment to being Group Chair member for at least three years, and up to six, subject to review
- Willingness to attend training courses, seminars and conferences to gain knowledge and skills associated with the role





Group structure

Corporate structure





Meet the team

Our Executive Management Team:



Tina Barnard – Chief Executive

Tina has been Chief Executive since we were formed in 2007. She is a qualified accountant who has been in the housing sector for over 30 years, working as a Finance Director in three housing organisations – CHP, Worthing Homes and New Era – as well as a financial analyst at the Housing Corporation. Tina has also been a Non-Executive Director for a number of housing and charitable organisations.

As Chief Executive, Tina has overall responsibility for delivering Watford Community Housing's Business Plan by working closely with directors, managers and staff, including the Marketing and Communications team, who report directly to her.



Penny Metcalf – Group Director of Partnerships & Investment

Penny has 20 years of experience in the affordable housing sector, including just under 13 years at Hightown Housing as Head of Projects and a further four at Settle as Executive Director of Development.

As Group Director of Partnerships and Investment, she oversees our development and asset management teams, helping drive sustainable growth through our ongoing partnerships with local councils, construction specialists and other housing associations.



Greg Whelan – Chief Financial Officer

Greg has worked in the social housing sector for 20 years, including 11 years at Watford Community Housing earlier in his career and three years as an Assistant Director of Finance & Procurement at Housing Solutions.

Greg is both a qualified accountant and treasurer, and as the Chief Financial Officer for the Group he is responsible for the finance, IT and treasury teams as well as the stewardship of the Group's financial operations.



Peter Cogan – Group Director of Operations

Peter has a wealth of experience in identifying and meeting customer needs, in roles across a range of key service industries, including housing.

Prior to his current position, he was in an interim role as Director of Customer Operations at Optivo, having previously been Executive Director of Customer Service at RHP Group, as well as serving as a Group Board member for Newlon Housing Trust.

As Group Director of Operations, Peter oversees many of our key customer-facing functions, including the Repairs, Housing, Customer Services, Customer Relations and Community Engagement teams.

Meet the team

Our Group Board:



Chris Cheshire – Chair

Chris is a Chartered Construction Manager with over 45 years' experience. He has been a Director of Asset Management for a large housing provider in London, as well as owning and managing his own businesses for the last 25 years. He has been involved with the Group since 2016, initially as a Board Co-optee and Chair of Clarendon Living, before becoming Chair in 2021.



Kay Burnaby

Kay Burnaby is a Chartered Surveyor with over 22 years of experience across public, private, and government-backed real estate sectors, specialising in strategic partnerships, JVs and the delivery of complex, multi-tenure projects. She has held senior leadership roles with some of the UK's largest housebuilders, a housing association, and a central government housing body.



Dale Butcher

Dale is a highly skilled businessman with expertise in strategy, business planning, transformation and growth. He was Chair of Greenfields Community Housing from 2017-20 before its merger with Colne to form Eastlight Community Housing. He was previously Group Development Director of Inchcape PLC (1986-2012), a trustee of the Inchcape Pension Scheme and Chair of its Investment Committee (1990-2012), Chair of the Lynch Hill Academy Trust (2016-19) and a Trustee of the Enthusiasm Trust Derby (2014-19).



Simon David

Simon has over 21 years of experience in the Career Management industry and has played a leading role as an operational manager, careers coach and consultant across the public, private and charity sector. He aims to use his experience as a Watford Community Housing leaseholder, as well as his previous experience of working for a local authority, to ensure that we keep tenants at the heart of our business.



Richard Hanrahan

Rich is a chartered accountant with 15 years' experience working in the Banking and Finance industry. In his current role, as the CFO of a Cambridge-based bank, he holds a regulated Senior Manager Function role. Rich spent 14 years working for a large UK retail bank. Rich also holds the CFA and Chartered Banker qualifications and is a governor of a local secondary school.



Clare Norton

Clare has worked to alleviate homelessness for over 30 years. For the last ten years, Clare has been the CEO of Peter Bedford Housing Association. Prior to this, Clare was Regional Director of Operations at Centrepoint and ran her own housing consultancy. She also has 15 years of governance experience, most recently in the role of Chair of North London Muslim Housing Association's Housing and Asset Committee, and as the Chair of our Customer Experience Committee.



Jenny Pattinson

Jenny is the CEO of Nightingale Hammerson, a charity that provides Residential, Nursing, Dementia and end-of-life care to over 250 people. She also represents Nightingale Hammerson on the Board of Care England. Jenny is an elected Councillor and Cabinet Member at Watford Borough Council where she is responsible for the Housing and Well-being Portfolio. She chairs the steering group for Dementia Friendly Watford and the Health and Well-being Forum, currently sits on the board of Citizens Advice Watford, and is Co-Chair of Governors at her local infant school.



Richard Petty

Richard is a Chartered Surveyor and Head of UK Residential Valuation at JLL, with responsibility for the firm's Residential Valuation teams across the country. Richard has 38 years' professional experience, with the last 29 years focused on affordable housing. In addition to his board role at Watford Community Housing and as Chair of Clarendon Living Limited, Richard is also a board member of The Riverside Group. Outside JLL, he has also held NED roles at Richmond Housing Partnership, Anchor Hanover Group and Dolphin Living Limited.



Michael Suarez

Mike is an Executive Director of Finance and Support Services in local government. He has also been a management consultant in the not-for-profit sector for a number of years across health, local and regional government and the housing sector, reflecting his career knowledge and experience. Mike has held a variety of NED positions and is the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.



Ceres Thompson

Ceres is a multi-disciplined professional with a background in international marketing, and community and social housing. Having worked with housing associations and a local authority for a number of years, she has a keen interest in developing good-quality homes, strengthening communities, and ensuring organisations deliver meaningful customer service. Ceres has a wealth of experience and aims to ensure that Watford Community Housing takes a holistic view of the issues affecting tenants before decisions are made.



Tim Willcocks

Tim is a Chartered Planning and Development surveyor with over 25 years' experience in the property world, including sales and marketing, development, consultancy and housing policy. He joined the affordable housing sector in 2007, leading successful sales and development teams, and working on national housing policy at the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England). Tim is currently Director of Public Sector Engagement at Heylo Housing, and he is also Chair of our Investment Committee.

Remuneration

Chair of Group Board

Fee: £13,000* per annum

*subject to review

Term of office: **three years, with possible renewal for a second three-year term.**

Attendance requirements:

Group Board meetings in 2026 are currently scheduled for:

- 26 January 2026
- 23 March 2026

As the proposed merger talks progress there are likely to be more meetings scheduled, which you will be notified of in advance.

Meetings are generally held late afternoons/ early evenings and usually do not finish later than 8pm.

Meetings will be held in person at our Gateway House office wherever possible. You will also be required to attend training sessions held throughout the year and other Group events – these may be in-person or online.



Making your application

Now you know all about us and the role, it's time for us to hear more about you and how you would help turn our plans into reality. Here's a reminder and a few instructions about what to do next.

1 **Make sure you've gone through this pack carefully:**
Read the pack and review our plans and aims – find out more at **wcht.org.uk**

2 **Review your CV:**
Tailor your CV so that it aligns your achievements to our goals and aims. Make sure it clearly tells us what you can bring to us and it's no longer than three pages.

3 **Provide a supporting statement:**
You should provide a statement of no more than 500 words on why you want to become Group Board Chair, and how you feel you meet the requirements as set out in the role profile.

4 **Make your application before the deadline:**
Make your formal application online.
Applications close on Sunday 19 October.

The key dates

Opening date for applications	Monday 29 September 2025
Closing date for applications	Sunday 19 October 2025
Informal stakeholder meeting	w/c Monday 3 November 2025
Final interviews	Thursday 6 November 2025
Virtually agreed by Group Board	w/c Monday 10 November 2025
Chair Designate role starts	Thursday 1 January 2026
Ratified formally by Group Board	Monday 26 January 2026
Watford Community Housing role starts	TBC

More information

For a conversation about these opportunities, please contact Amy Fox – call 0800 218 2247 or email amy.fox@wcht.org.uk

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community
housing

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