

Vicinity in partner talks

Vicinity Housing Group is in early talks with Contour Housing Group to examine the potential of forming a legal partnership.

Both companies stress the process is at a very early stage and will take some time to conclude should the process go forward. However, the companies feel that 'on paper' at least they are a good fit – sharing similar cultures, aspirations and long term goals.

Bill Tubey, Chair of Vicinity Housing Group stated: "The housing sector is facing an increasingly challenging environment. Should a partnership eventually go ahead, it will be in a strong position to face the future with increased confidence as well as continuing to provide excellent services to its customers.

"At the heart of everything we do is delivering excellent customer service and doing more for people at a local level. Both companies are committed to maintaining our member housing associations' clear identity and local focus."

Chris Jeffries, Chair of Contour Housing Group said: "One of the most encouraging aspects of the proposed partnership is the compatibility of cultures in key areas such as tenant involvement and service delivery.

"The commitment to member organisations and tenants will be a strong theme of the potential partnership and the focus going forward will be exploring how the parent organisations can be even better together in the years ahead."

Vicinity subsidiaries include Atrium, Beechwood Ballantyne, Cobalt Housing, Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT) and Ribble Valley Homes. Vicinity works across Merseyside, Cheshire and Lancashire and owns and manages 17,500 homes. It employs around 530 staff, over 400 of who work across the region in neighbourhood offices. Contour is a similar size and has housing association subsidiaries across the North West.

Contour Housing Group owns and manages over 20,000 homes in Lancashire, Cheshire and Greater Manchester through its member organisations Contour Homes, Hyndburn Homes and Peak Valley Housing Association.

Both organisations operate exclusively in the North West of England and combine traditional RSLs and stock transfers with non stock holding parents. If the partnership goes ahead, the new parent Group will create seven stock holding member organisations with property portfolios ranging in size from 1,000 to 12,000.

Staff of both organisations have been informed about the partnership discussions and residents and tenants will be kept fully informed as the process moves forward. By working in partnership, it will enable us to deliver a more efficient service to our customers and we hope to reinvest any savings in providing you with increased and improved services. We would like to stress that these talks are very early and it will not be a quick process. The partnership will require a range of approvals and careful planning to make sure it supports the key principles of both existing organisations.