Neighbourhood Plan for Fitton Hill 2015 - 2018
We consulted all residents in the autumn of 2014 to ask what your main priorities are about Fitton Hill.

This Neighbourhood Plan sets out your priorities, explains how we are currently delivering them and sets out how we aim to improve performance throughout the life of the plan.

The plan outlines the main issues that you told us affect your neighbourhood and identifies what needs to be done to address them.
You Told Us

Fitton Hill is a really good area to live in. It is within easy reach of Oldham and Ashton and has good transport links to both town centres. There are three primary schools on the estate with one ‘Outstanding’ and two ‘Good’ Ofsted reports and two academies nearby.

When asked, 94% of tenants told us they were satisfied with the overall service we provide, 89.9% of you were happy with the quality of your home and 97% were satisfied with Fitton Hill as a place to live.

You told us that since Villages took over Fitton Hill in 2004 some very positive things have happened to improve the estate. Not only have the physical improvements had a great impact, the reputation of the estate and the perception of Fitton Hill to the wider population of Oldham has improved dramatically.

Crime has significantly reduced since 2004. Crime figures for the estate are contained within the Medlock Vale Ward statistics where total crime further reduced in 2014. We receive very few reports of incidents of anti-social behaviour.

In 2014, 200 new homes were built on the estate; half of them were built for owner occupation that other half for rent. All of the properties were fully occupied upon completion which is a very healthy indication of community confidence in Fitton Hill. A further scheme for sale will be completed in 2015.
The issues you told us were the most important to you and where you said we needed to work with you and other agencies to bring about change fell under four main headings:

**Employment**
Training and Volunteering, helping you prepare to find work, IT issues & digital training, financial & budgeting training.

**Social Value**
Activities for older and disabled persons, community events (gala days, Halloween, bonfire and Christmas activities).

**Health and Well Being**
Energy and fuel poverty issues, North West in Bloom activities, healthy living.

**Neighbourhood**
Issues with litter, area cleaning, fly tipping and to identify and promote venues for the community to use on the estate.
You told us that it is important for you to be in work. Those who are currently out of work and have been for some time said that they would appreciate help in finding work, how to access jobs on-line, how to prepare for interview and how to find a job that suits your strengths.

We are a member of the Oldham Work Club Network and hold our own Villages Work Club twice a week in the Villages Information Shop. The club is friendly and informal and is run by Villages staff and volunteers from the estate.

In 2014 we had 99 new members and helped 25 of them find work. We also have invested in ‘My Work Search’ – this is a fantastic online jobseeker training and support tool.

We are here to offer you help, advice and assistance in getting the best out of ‘My Work Search’.

Our aim is to:

🌟 Achieve a minimum membership of the Work Club of 120 members each year.

🌟 Support 35 more residents into work each year.

🌟 Assist 30 more residents to access ‘My Work Search’ each year.

If you would like more information contact Lisa Fowles, Community Development Officer.

📞 0161 622 6894
📞 07834 126 664
✉️ lisa.fowles@villages.org.uk
@villageslisa

facebook.com/FittonHillWorkClub
We all accept that modern technology is becoming more important in our lives. Many of you told us that you need help to learn how to use the Internet, buy goods on-line, find cheaper gas and electricity deals, look for work and use email. Others said that they were finding it increasingly difficult to manage their money as the welfare reforms begin to make it more difficult to make ends meet. Some of you said you would benefit from brushing up your Maths and English. Some residents told us that they would prefer to try voluntary work or work experience in order to gain confidence before looking for work.

We have supported 274 residents to attend a range of training courses in 2014 and intend to continue this and offer more in the future.

We have supported ‘Oldham College in The Community’, who have delivered basic IT, Maths and English and Pre-Teaching Assistant courses.

There is free access to the internet in the library and the Villages shop, along with free Wi-Fi in the Neighbourhood Centre. We have supported ‘Get on-line at Home’ and have promoted a wide range of external training opportunities.

There are volunteering opportunities for local residents within the Work Club. There have been seven volunteers, of these two have found work, three have gone into full time education and the remaining volunteers continue to help fellow members of our community to find work.

We have assisted in training volunteers in Department of Work and Pension courses such as Personal Independence Payment, Work Capability Assessment and Carers Allowance.

We aim to:

🌟 Encourage a minimum of 320 residents to attend training and employment events each year.

🌟 Provide more IT and ‘key skills’ training within Fitton Hill.

🌟 Produce a ‘Volunteers Strategy’ which will outline a consistent approach for volunteers and will make it clear what they can expect from us and what we can expect from them. If you would like more information contact Lisa Fowles, Community Development Officer.

☎ 0161 622 6894
☎ 07834 126 664
✉ lisa.fowles@villages.org.uk
啁 @villageslisa
Fitton Hill has always had a very strong sense of community and a very strong core of residents who were committed to making the estate a better place to live. However, before the estate was transferred to Villages there were no supported community groups or activities. If an event took place it was invariably organised by residents in isolation without any input, financial or otherwise from the landlord. We didn’t even have a Christmas tree!

When we were consulting with residents prior to taking over the management of the estate, we were told in no uncertain terms that Fitton Hill was a fantastic place to live with a vibrant community who wanted desperately to work with Villages to make Fitton Hill a place to be proud of.

This is where we believe we truly demonstrate that we are ‘More than just a Landlord’. We have a dedicated Community Development Officer who is responsible for leading on all aspects of community involvement. Numerous social events are held every year and there is ample opportunity for residents to get involved.
For example, we know from feedback received that the annual Fitton Hill Gala day is really popular and very much enjoyed by all age groups. We also provide fabulous Halloween, Bonfire and Christmas activities. Attendance and participation in all these activities increases year on year.

In addition to the annual events there is opportunity for residents to get involved in activities aimed at specific age groups; these include senior and junior youth clubs, The ‘Schools Out’ programme which provides activities during school holidays. The 2 o’clock club and the Young at Heart club are just two of several groups aimed at our more mature customer. Local community groups can apply for grants of up to £500 that are approved by the Fitton Hill Estate Management Committee.

We also contribute to and sit on the funding panel of ‘Respect Our Community Awards’ where grants are awarded for the benefit of communities in Oldham.

Despite all we do, we recognise that we can do more. We aim to:

- Offer opportunities for more residents to get involved with activities.
- Raise awareness of all groups and activities available in the community.
- Encourage residents who are not Villages tenants to join in.
- Welcome and offer opportunities for Black and Minority Ethnic residents to get involved in the community.

If you would like more information: contact Lisa Fowles, Community Development Officer.

📞 0161 622 6894
📞 07834 126 664
✉️ lisa.fowles@villages.org.uk
Tweet @villageslisa – twitter icon
You told us that supporting residents with energy issues is important. Many people are struggling to pay their energy bills (gas, electricity and water). It is not just older people who are most at risk of not being able to heat their homes. Nationally there are over one million working households struggling to afford their energy bills. This leads to fuel poverty which can severely affect people’s health.

The residents who take part in our annual North West in Bloom activities told us that they enjoy getting involved and being a part of a project which makes Fitton Hill a nice place to live. Each year we have had increasing success and seen an increase in numbers of involved residents and we want this to continue.

We promote health living by supporting local groups and organisations to provide activities within our estate; for more details see Our Times newsletter.

Since 2012 we have successfully supported residents to claim the ‘Warm Homes Rebate’ and secured additional funding from the Government to help residents switch energy supplier. We have also provided group and one to one advice sessions and have trained Villages staff and resident Energy Champions to provide support.

We also promoted the work of Oldham Councils Warm Home’s scheme and have improved a number of properties by providing external insulation, loft and cavity wall insulation and central heating upgrades.

In 2011, we entered North West in Bloom for the first time and have since won one Bronze and two Silver awards. We support local community groups and offer financial help for them to enter ‘It’s Your Neighbourhood Awards’. Two groups have already achieved the highest honour ‘Outstanding’ for which they and we are incredibly proud.

Despite intensive work with residents there is more to be done. Many residents are still in fuel poverty and are missing out on the Warm Homes rebate. Some are not aware of how much they can save either by switching supplier or changing their payment method.

We aim to:

- Work in partnership with community volunteers to deliver regular energy advice sessions in the Villages Information Shop.
- Assist residents to claim the ‘Warm Homes’ rebate.
- Help residents find cheaper energy alternatives provide advice about energy debt issues and reduce reliance on pre-payment meters.
- Work with schools, local groups and health providers to hold a “Big Energy Saving Bus” Campaign
- Work with Oldham Council to support the ‘Warm Homes Oldham’ initiative
- Take an active role in the ‘Big Energy Saving Week’
- Increase community involvement in North West in Bloom and go for Gold!
- Develop opportunities for people to live healthy lives.
- Improve access to sports and recreation.

Health and Well-being
Compare gas and electricity prices at www.villages.org.uk
This is an area where many residents told us they are struggling. Those in full time low paid work find that their wages do not cover increasing energy costs, food bills and the general cost of living. Residents who have to rely on benefits told us that they are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet due to the welfare reforms and changes to benefits. Over 150 tenants on the estate have had a 14% or 25% reduction in their benefit due to the Under-Occupation Tax, more commonly known as ‘The Bedroom Tax’.

Since 2011 we have held numerous events advising residents of the changes to the welfare system. We have issued help and advice leaflets, we have targeted communications to those we know to be affected and we have issued help and guidance on the Villages website, in the quarterly Newsletter and regularly on Facebook and Twitter.

We have referred people to debt advice agencies and have promoted Loan Shark Week, The Oldham Credit Union and The Oldham Food Bank.

The Welfare Reforms will affect more residents year on year as Universal Credit continues to be rolled out. Some people in work may also struggle to manage financially, particularly those on low income, in part-time work or on zero hour’s contracts.

We will:

- Continue to work with outside agencies to offer help and guidance to anyone who needs assistance in managing their finances.
- Provide assistance in completing paperwork, or for making on-line applications for benefits.

We are here to help, please don’t leave it too late to contact us should you need any advice or assistance in respect of paying your rent, or if you need any other benefit or financial advise.

If you would like more information contact The Income Management Team

📞 0161 633 4060
✉️ rents@villages.org.uk
🌐 www.villages.org.uk
Villages recognise the impact that the local environment has on a person’s life and as a result of this we invest heavily in your community. Indeed, residents are increasingly looking to us to provide a safe and attractive neighbourhood, as well as a housing service. Therefore, investment in communities plays a big part in our plans when looking to improve residents’ quality of life and levels of satisfaction with us as your landlord.

When asked, 97% of Villages tenants expressed satisfaction with Fitton Hill as a place to live. This statistic has improved significantly since Villages became your landlord.

Each year we work in partnership with First Choice Homes Oldham to reward our garden competition winners at a Borough wide presentation evening.

We hold regular community ‘clear up’ days and employ an external company to clean the communal areas to flats and shops weekly.

We have a dedicated landscaping team who work all year round to provide general landscape maintenance which includes grass cutting, tree work, bed maintenance, winter work and preparing empty property gardens ready for new tenants. Residents also benefit from a free weekly skip service.

We work closely with the Neighbourhood Police Team and Oldham Community Safety Service to share ideas and information and listen to and work with residents to keep Fitton Hill a safe and attractive neighbourhood.

We recognise there is more to do to continue to improve the estate.

To achieve this we aim to:

🌟 Increase satisfaction with the services Villages provide.

🌟 Improve the quality of your home.

🌟 Improve satisfaction with Fitton Hill as a place to live.

Increase the number of entries into the annual Garden Competition.

🌟 Increase the number of community ‘clear up’ events and encourage more resident involvement.

🌟 Sign up to the ‘Keep Britain Tidy’ campaign and promote activities.

🌟 Work with the local primary schools to encourage their pupils to ‘Love where they Live’ and become ‘Community Champions’.

🌟 Work with residents and partners to reduce the amount of dog fouling on the estate.
Residents switch energy supplier. We have also provided group and one to one advice sessions and have trained Villages staff and resident Energy Champions to provide support.

We also promoted the work of Oldham Councils Warm Home’s scheme and have improved a number of properties by providing external insulation, loft and cavity wall insulation and central heating upgrades.

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Despite intensive work with residents there is more to be done. Many residents are still in fuel poverty and are missing out on the Warm Homes rebate. Some are not aware of how much they can save either by switching supplier or changing their payment method.

Φ Continue to involve the Neighbourhood Police Team in our community events and activities.

If you would like more information about getting involved in community activities or have any ideas on how to help us improve the environment contact Lisa Fowles, Community Development Officer.

📞 0161 622 6894
📞 07834 126 664
✉️ lisa.fowles@villages.org.uk
🐦 @villageslisa
If you wish to make a comment about the service you receive you can speak to any member of staff who will be able to assist you. Alternatively, if you have a complaint about any part of our service, ask us for details of our complaints procedure.

2 Fircroft Road  
Fitton Hill  
Oldham  
OL8 2QN.

0161 633 4060

www.villages.org.uk
/villageshousing
@villageshousing