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HOUSING GROUPS JOIN TO BRING ENHANCED SERVICES AND VALUE FOR MONEY TO RESIDENTS

First Wessex Housing Group and Portsmouth Housing Association have grouped to bring about greater value for money for residents and further improvements to customer service.

The grouping will firmly establish First Wessex Housing Group as a major provider of around 16,000 affordable homes across Hampshire - with properties spanning Aldershot, Farnborough, Eastleigh, Southampton, Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth.

Peter Walters will become the new Chief Executive of the expanded group later this month, taking over from David Smith who will be retiring. Previously Chief Executive of English Churches Housing Group, Peter is delighted to be joining First Wessex and brings with him a wealth of knowledge on the housing sector.

Peter commented: "First Wessex and Portsmouth Housing are two successful and dynamic organisations providing excellent services to residents. This grouping brings great opportunities to improve yet further. There are substantial economies of scale to be achieved by becoming a larger organisation and these efficiency savings will be reinvested into improving services for our customers."

David Smith added: "There are benefits to both organisations in coming together. Portsmouth Housing will expand our geographic coverage and means the enlarged group will become a major regional partner in the provision of housing in Hampshire, whilst also maintaining a strong local presence to ensure the effective management of homes."

This grouping happens less than two years after Atlantic Housing Group joined forces with Pavilion Housing Association to become the First Wessex Housing Group. In that time there has been a dramatic turnaround in customer service at Pavilion and particularly in the satisfaction of tenants with the repairs and maintenance of Pavilion homes.

Portsmouth Housing Association will become a subsidiary of the First Wessex Housing Group along with sister companies Atlantic, Pavilion, First Atlantic, Wessex Property Services and Fernhill Care.

Ben Stoneham, the new Chair of First Wessex, said: "The grouping of First Wessex and the Portsmouth Housing Association creates the largest predominately Hampshire based housing association group. This will enable us to be at the heart of housing developments and regeneration initiatives in this part of the country. It will provide greater opportunities and challenges for our excellent staff, the prospects of better services for our residents, and more investment to help the less advantaged in our areas. Pooling our resources and talents should help to increase our impact locally."

ENDS

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Biography on Peter Walters

Peter started his career in housing with posts in several London local authorities, beginning as a housing management trainee in Wandsworth, followed by roles in Westminster Council and Barnet. In 1994 he became Housing and Social Services Director in the London Borough of Merton. From Merton, Peter moved to English Churches Housing Group (ECHG) as Chief Executive.

ECHG operates throughout England, including Hampshire, and is a substantial player in specialist supported housing for vulnerable single homeless people, as well as a provider of general needs and older people's homes. Through this work, and with his social services experience, Peter comes to First Wessex with a wide knowledge of all aspects of housing, but also of the wider issues of disadvantage and social exclusion.

Peter is also well versed in mergers and grouping, with ECHG having just joined the Liverpool based Riverside Housing Group in one of the largest mergers yet seen in the sector.

Note to Editors

First Wessex Housing Group manages around 16,000 affordable homes primarily in Hampshire and with some activity in Surrey, Thames Valley and Oxford.

The group comprises Atlantic Housing Limited, First Atlantic Housing, Pavilion Housing Association, Portsmouth Housing Association, Fernhill Care Limited and Wessex Property Limited.

Portsmouth Housing Association: provides homes in Portsmouth, Fareham, Gosport and Havant. It also provides a wide range of community regeneration services across South East Hampshire.

Atlantic Housing and First Atlantic Housing: provide a full range of affordable housing including rented, supported, shared ownership and key worker housing. A large support portfolio includes housing for older people, extra-care housing, dementia care housing, housing for people with learning disabilities, people recovering from mental illness and some specialist accommodation.

Pavilion Housing Association: the largest provider of housing association homes for rent in the Aldershot, Farnborough, Ash and Farnham areas.

Fernhill Care: provides care services for tenants of First Wessex Housing Group and other landlords and for individuals in the community with support needs. It specialises in domiciliary, extra- and dementia care.

Wessex Property Limited: the group's in-house repairs and maintenance organisation.

www.firstwessexhg.co.uk

www.atlantichousing.co.uk

www.pavilionha.co.uk

www.phagroup.org.uk