

A hand holding a magnifying glass over paper house models. The background is a blurred green and white bokeh. A blue diagonal stripe runs across the image from the top left to the bottom right. The left side of the image is an orange gradient.

**Key Note Speech:  
Ceris Esplen, Director of  
Strategy and Partnerships at  
Irwell Valley Homes**

‘Why our social purpose should drive us more than ever’

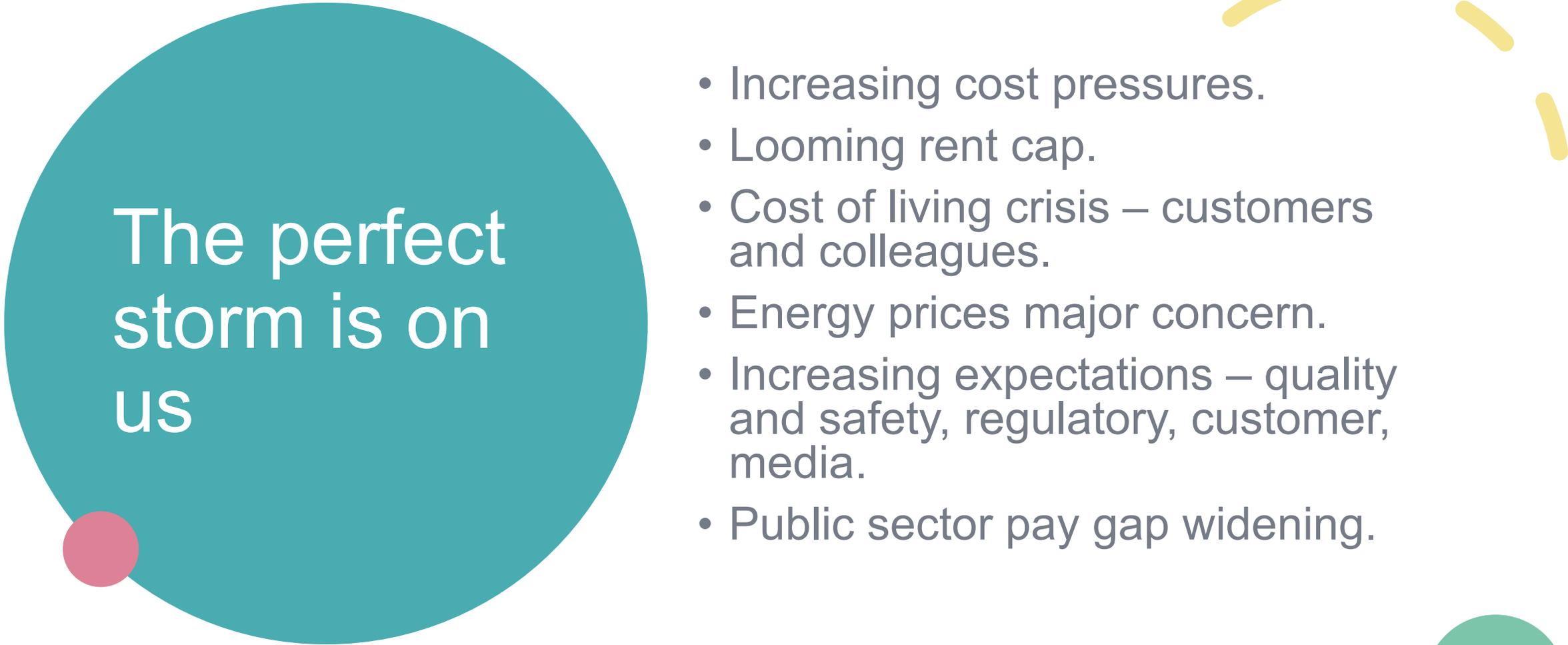


# Holding onto our social purpose

Ceris Esplen  
Director of Strategy and  
Partnerships



irwell  
valley  
homes



# The perfect storm is on us

- Increasing cost pressures.
- Looming rent cap.
- Cost of living crisis – customers and colleagues.
- Energy prices major concern.
- Increasing expectations – quality and safety, regulatory, customer, media.
- Public sector pay gap widening.

# Tough choices ahead

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At a time when people need us more than ever, how can we do more than we are now, with less?



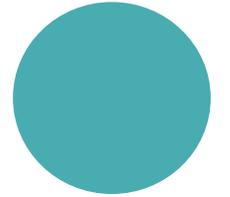
# Doing the right thing, not the easy thing

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- ESG framework published in 2022.
- Refocused efforts in delivering our social purpose - supporting people to live well and reducing our impact on the environment.
- This has never been more important.
- We must hold onto why we came to be, to be here for the long-term.
- Growing feeling that carbon zero won't be a priority if cap comes in, yet energy prices are the biggest single risk to our income.

# Same purpose - new thinking

- Increasing the supply of more affordable and low energy homes.
- Making existing homes energy efficient and cost effective to run.
- Reviewing services and charges in consultation with customers.
- Re-focusing frontline services to support financial inclusion and energy efficiency.
- Partnerships and creative solutions for funding.
- Lobbying – re-focused ask and demonstrating our impact.





# Increasing supply

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- Average rent over 40% less than market rent - single biggest contribution to COL crisis we can make.
- The UK is not providing the level of affordable housing needed now and COL crisis will increase demand further.
- Improves overall quality of Social Housing stock.
- Business plan is built on development – reducing this impacts our long-term viability.
- Massively boosts the economy – increasing employment, demand for skilled workers, more money cycling through local communities, plus opportunities for regional growth.

# Increasing supply

- 161 new affordable homes delivered, plus 1125 more over the next five years - still committed to numbers.
- Focus on social or affordable rent and LA targets for supported and older persons accommodation.
- £50m ten-year regeneration programme in Trafford – stopping impacts overall viability of the master plan.
- Re-focused on energy efficiency - fabric first and new technologies.
- Increasing development partnerships to share risks and costs.
- Working with SMEs to gain better access to local supply chains.
- Buying sites direct rather than package deals.



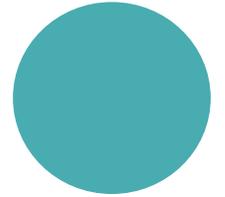
# Making homes cheaper to run

- Asset management audit and targeting investment in homes with lowest EPC ratings.
- Switching programmes to focus on fabric first and lowest EPC – won't be popular so engagement is key.
- Retro-fit trial home to test technologies to help direct future investment by property type.
- Circa £8.75 million in the next five years to ensure properties achieve EPC C.
- Matching planned investment with social housing decarb funding.



# Focus on financial inclusion and energy efficiency

- Maximising efficiency of existing heating systems - increased support from front line teams.
- One team approach – basic energy advice given at every visit.
- Green Doctors - free, impartial advice to help people save energy where possible in the home, and access other services and initiatives available.
- Door knocking – holistic approach to FI and getting the rent in!
- Community investment focused on fuel, food, furniture, financial inclusion and employment.
- COL support fund - social value element of our procurement tendering.
- COL engagement plan to share targeted support and education.





# Creative funding and partnerships

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- Being bid ready – initial investment but big pay off.
- Strong partnerships with other HA – we all want the same thing.
- Supply Chain Sustainability School - over £1m free CPD for suppliers in sustainability.
- Green skills development – upskilling and employment for residents – colleges and FE.
- Consortiums – bidding, developing supply chain and skills development.
- Irwell Valley Foundation – £1 invested £7 match funding.
- Setting up and working with constituted groups.

# Lobbying and government support

- Instability in political landscape.
- General election and unrest over key policy issues – rare opportunity for major change.
- Housing often makes top ten in voters concerns but rarely makes it into election campaigns.
- 55% of voters across parties feel affordability should be at the heart of housing policy.
- Majority of public don't feel government is building enough social housing (71% of new tory voters, 41% of old tory voters).
- Change in red wall has shifted party politics.



# What we can do

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- National opportunity to create a coalition of support for social housing.
- Link housing to economy and other key policy areas or issues i.e. COL, carbon zero.
- Seeing is believing – job for us all. Find the MPs interest and play to this.
- Focus on residents too – they are the voters.





## Key asks

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- Increase in revenue funding to mitigate rent cap, coupled with additional capital funding to drive up the quality of existing homes.
- Grant rates that reflect regeneration and market challenges.
- Increased funding for carbon zero and more flexibility in bidding.
- Support to develop technology and supply chain to deliver carbon zero.
- Match funding for community initiatives and joining up public spending.