



## HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Date: Thursday, 25 October 2018

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Fungai Nyamukapa

Email: [fungai.nyamukapa@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:fungai.nyamukapa@stevenage.gov.uk) Tel: 01438242707

Members:

**Councillors:** P Bibby CC (Chair), S Barr, L Kelly, L Martin-Haugh and S-J Potter

**Resident Members:** F Plumridge (Tenant) (Vice-Chair), C Anderson (Tenant), K Gibson (Tenant), L Saunders (Tenant), L Storey (Tenant) and J Thurlow (Leaseholder)

**Staff Members:** J Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment) and C Miller (Assistant - Director Direct Services)

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### AGENDA

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive apologies for absence and declarations of interest

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting held on 12 September 2018

Pages 3 – 8

**3. CUSTOMER SCRUTINY PANEL VOIDS REVIEW REPORT**

To consider the Customer Scrutiny Panel Voids Review Report

Pages 9 – 16

**4. HRA MTFS REPORT**

To consider the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy (HRA MTFS) report

**5. RESPONSE TO GREEN PAPER ON SOCIAL HOUSING**

To discuss the Green Paper on Social Housing and make recommendations for Council response

Pages 17 – 28

**6. REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE**

To receive Repairs and Voids update

**7. APPROVAL OF HOUSING AND INVESTMENT BUSINESS UNIT FIFTH TIER STRUCTURE**

To consider the proposed fifth tier structure of the Housing and Investment Business Unit

**8. FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE**

To receive feedback from October Community Select Committee meeting

**9. RESIDENTS' NETWORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018**

To discuss HMAB representation at the Residents' Network annual conference 2018

Pages 29 – 32

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

To consider any business accepted by the Chair as urgent

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 20 November 2018, 6.00pm, Autun Room

Agenda Published **17 October 2018**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 12 September 2018

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Autun Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:**           **Councillors:** P Bibby CC (Chair), S Barr, and L Martin-Haugh

**Resident Members:** C Anderson (Tenant), K Gibson (Tenant),  
L Saunders (Tenant), L Storey (Tenant) and J Thurlow (Leaseholder)

**Staff Members:** J Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and  
Investment)

**In Attendance:**   Councillor Jeannette Thomas (Executive Portfolio Holder - Housing,  
Health and Older People) and Gurmukh Lota (Resident Involvement  
Officer)

**Start / End Time:**     Start Time:   6.00pm  
                              End Time:    6.40pm

#### 1       **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from F Plumridge, C Miller and Cllrs L Kelly and S-J Potter.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2       **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting held on 16 August 2018 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **Update on Actions**

Actions from the previous meeting were all complete or as detailed below.

<b>Outstanding items carried over from 16 August 2018</b>		
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
3. Liberty Gas Update	SBC website to be updated to include details of the annual gas check procedure and appointment	M & E Compliance Manager contacted for an update

	options for customers	
3. Liberty Gas Update	The M & E Compliance Manager to provide updates on the Gas Service Improvement Plan	M & E Compliance Manager to provide date of next update for HMAB
3. Liberty Gas Update	Members to submit gas complaints cases to the M & E Compliance Manager	M & E Compliance Manager to provide contact details for gas complaints
5. Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey	The damp and mould review be shared with leaseholders	Leaseholders to be provided with damp and mould report after Community Select Committee revisit of review scheduled for 2018/19 Damp and Mould review

**3 UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE MEETINGS**

The Executive Portfolio Holder (Housing, Health and Older People) informed the Board that the September Executive meeting had discussed a number of finance items including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2019/20 and General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Executive Portfolio Holder announced that there had been positive feedback from the Voids team regarding the recent move from Cavendish Road Depot to Daneshill House.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update is noted.

#### 4 **HOUSING ALL UNDER ONE ROOF UPDATE**

The Assistant Director (Housing and Investment) provided an update on the Housing All Under One Roof (HAUOR) programme. HMAB members were informed that:

- The Transformation of Housing Advice and Homeless project phase had been completed
- New Housing Supply and Housing Options teams are in place
- Recruitment of managers of the for the Homelessness team was underway
- All Housing Operations Manager positions had been filled
- Review of the Tier 5 structure was at the project planning phase
- Motivational Interview and customer services training had been arranged for officers
- Homelessness team's policies and procedures had been reviewed to ensure compliance with the Homeless Reduction Act
- Recent figures showed a fall in staff sickness levels for the Housing and Investment team
- Sheltered scheme lettings were now being handled by Supported Housing Officers
- The Tenancy Support team had successfully transitioned to mobile working. This was aimed at reducing duplication of work and freeing up staff time
- The Council was now using Northgate's Supported Housing Module
- A Northgate self-service module had been purchased
- The Council had commissioned health checks on the Northgate system

It was indicated that a customer service training provider had been selected. Staff training was due to commence shortly. The Housing and Investment team was available to facilitate telephone consultations between Members and the training provider so as to provide insight on resident priorities and shape the training sessions. Members were informed that project documents would be used to monitor the progress of the business unit restructuring.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Members contact the Assistant Director prior to commencement of the customer service training sessions
2. That the Assistant Director circulates the project initiation documents to the HMAB

## 5 **REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE**

Prior to the meeting, the Chair had been informed that there were no significant repairs and voids issues to report. The HMAB had also received apologies for absence from the Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services).

It was **RESOLVED** that the Repairs and Voids update be deferred to the next meeting.

## 6 **TENANTS ANNUAL REPORT AND FUTURE PUBLICITY**

The HMAB considered the Draft Tenants' Annual Report "Housing Matters".

Members were informed that copies of Housing Matters were sent to community centres, libraries, sheltered accommodation properties and residents on the Customer Pool database. Hard copies were sent only to those residents who could not access the publication online. Members welcomed the £50 shopping voucher incentive that could be won by a resident who provided feedback on the publication. It was indicated that residents should be provided with a variety of options to respond to the publication.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That a link be added on the Council website for customer feedback on the publication
2. That arrangements be made to distribute the publication to customers who did not have internet access

## 7 **COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

A member sought clarification on whether it might be appropriate for a representative of HMAB to attend Community Select Committee (CSC) meetings as a guest to find out what was on the Committee's Work Plan for the year and if the HMAB could contribute on matters related to housing service. Members were informed that CSC meetings were open to the public except for confidential or exempt items. Several Members expressed interest in attending CSC meetings.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Community Select Committee be circulated to interested Members
2. That Councillor S Barr makes a formal approach to the Select Committee Chair for a discussion on possible collaboration arrangements

8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair accepted urgent items on HAUOR Housing sessions and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan update. Members were informed that sessions had been arranged to update staff on the HAUOR programme. The one hour long sessions had been scheduled for 21 September and 14 December 2018 at 10.00am, 11.30am, 2.00pm and 3.30pm in the Council Chamber. The recommended dress code for the HAUOR session on 14 December was Christmas jumper or any item of Christmas clothing. Members were invited to the HAUOR sessions.

The Assistant Director (Housing and Investment) informed the Board that the HRA Business Plan update was due to be considered at either the October or November meeting of the Executive. It was indicated that ideally the HMAB would comment on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update HRA 2018/19-2022/23 at a regular meeting before the date of the Executive meeting. There was a possibility that the MTFS report would not be ready in time for the October HMAB meeting.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the MTFS report be submitted to HMAB members by email for comments if the item was on the October Executive meeting agenda
2. That MTFS report be included on the November HMAB agenda if it was not considered at the October Executive meeting

9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 25 October 2018, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room

**CHAIR**

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<b>Customer Scrutiny Panel's Review of the Voids Process: 23 April 2018- 11 September 2018</b>	
<b>Date report presented to Housing Management Advisory Board</b>	25/10/2018
<b>Review Lead – Lesley Storey</b>	<b>Panel members directly involved in the review</b> James Smith Doreen Howell Chris Danpure

<b>1.</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF THE SERVICE REVIEW</b>
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To establish any areas for improvement in voids management</li> <li>Investigate areas of poor performance in relation to the process</li> <li>Interrogate internal procedures for unnecessary delays or duplication</li> <li>Investigate communications elements, both within repairs and to other teams</li> <li>To interrogate ways to improve the voids process, saving time and money</li> </ul>
1.2	The review looked at the service because the average turnaround time was consistently greater than the set target resulting in increased rent loss and customers having to wait longer to get properties.
<b>2.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
2.1	<p><u>One</u></p> <p>All properties and gardens should be inspected on a more structured regular basis throughout the tenancy.</p> <p><b>Benefits</b> – It would provide a regular up to date stock condition in the database. Issues with the property could be identified earlier and potential breaches of the tenancy agreement e.g. meter tampering, unauthorised major alterations and vulnerable tenants would be highlighted.</p> <p>This could also reduce the void turnaround time and therefore loss of income.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> - Interviews, operations meeting, shadowing and viewing the void properties.</p> <p><b>Timescale</b> – Six months</p>

2.2	<p><u>Two</u></p> <p>At the pre-void stage both the tenant and SBC sign and agree on the work that needs to be completed by the tenant. This, then be followed up by an inspection before the tenant hands back the keys.</p> <p><b>Benefits</b> –Property is left in a lettable standard, shorter turnaround time and lower void loss.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> – Voids inspections and interview.</p> <p><b>Timescale</b> – Six months</p>
2.3	<p><u>Three</u></p> <p>To establish up to date documentation on policy and procedures.</p> <p><b>Benefits</b> – Fit for purpose so that staff have the necessary information to complete their role.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> - Interviews and no documentation available at the commencement of the review.</p> <p><b>Timescale</b> – Six months</p>
2.4	<p><u>Four</u></p> <p>Investment should be involved in the regular void meetings to provide quicker decisions on work requiring major investments.</p> <p><b>Benefits</b>- Improved communication and productivity, shorter turnaround time and lower void loss.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> - Interviews and documentation.</p> <p><b>Timescales</b> – One month</p>
2.5	<p><u>Five</u></p> <p>All relevant staff should have access to the keystone IT system.</p> <p><b>Benefits</b>- The system holds gas, electrical, asbestos and building certificates which are needed by the staff to check the status of the empty properties.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> - Interviews.</p> <p><b>Timescales</b> – Three months</p>

<p>2.6</p>	<p><u>Six</u></p> <p>When a property is ready to let, any unfinished work should be listed and signed by the project officer and sent to the lettings team. When letting to the customer, this document should be countersigned by the letting officer and the incoming tenant.</p> <p><b>Benefits-</b> Quicker turnaround time and will prevent disputes between SBC and the tenant. Better customer satisfaction.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> - Complaints received documentation.</p> <p><b>Timescales</b> – Six months</p>
<p>2.7</p>	<p><u>Seven</u></p> <p>To provide officers and operatives with a reliable tablet computer to use when inspecting properties to allow quick upload of information regarding the property.</p> <p><b>Benefits-</b>Speed up the process and improved accuracy.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> - Interviews and void visits.</p> <p><b>Timescales</b> – Six months</p>
<p>2.8</p>	<p><u>Eight</u></p> <p>When tenants return keys to SBC they should deliver them to the CSC or a member of SBC staff, and receive a signature for keys returned. The member of staff would also be able to check if the tenant should return communal door key fobs as well. The tenant would then have proof of returned keys/fobs and would avoid possible problems for the tenant and SBC.</p> <p><b>Benefits</b> – Keys would not go missing or get mixed up if posted through the CSC letterbox. Ensuring the return of fobs would also save on the cost of replacements, resetting a door entry system, and maintain the security of tenants/leaseholders living in the block.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> – Interviews.</p> <p><b>Timescale</b> – Six months</p>

<b>3.</b>	<b>POSITIVE FINDINGS</b>
3.1	We noticed that there is good communication between void/repairs, lettings and tenancy thorough regular weekly meetings, where the information is fully shared.
3.2	The majority of information is now stored on Northgate, Keystone and P drive. This allows all relevant staff to access the information.
3.3	Photographic evidence of all recharges is saved on P drive as a proof for the outgoing tenant when invoicing the recharges.
3.4	Project officers make regular visits to ongoing voids to monitor the progress and liaise with Chargehand.
3.5	Project officers carry out meter reading on day one of the voids process, and inform SBC's electricity supplier.
3.6	The change of locks being done by project officers at start and end of voids process makes efficient use of their time.
3.7	Recycling of lock barrel/keys to reduce costs.
3.8	At the end of the voids process all documentation and keys are handed to the lettings team. This enables the lettings team to have a complete history of the voids transactions.
3.9	Professionalism of the officers in dealing with tenants.
3.10	The willingness of the staff to engage fully with the CSP during this review.
3.11	Previous problems experienced with gas contractor have improved.
<b>4.</b>	<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>
4.1	Northgate can be slow which has led to the use of separate spread sheets.
4.2	There is not enough storage space for discarded tenant property. This causes delay in void process.
4.3	The use of a handyman service could assist the tenant to make the necessary repairs. This also could be used by the elderly and vulnerable to make any repairs that they require. This would give the tenants the confidence to use the service as it would be recommended by SBC.

<b>5.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>
5.1	<p>This report covers the review of the voids process carried out by four members of CSP team. The voids process includes various departments and is measured by council wide performance indicators.</p> <p>Following a kick start meeting the group formulated their remit and served the Service Review Notice to SBC to formally advise them of their review.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>
6.1	Four members of the CSP used a range of methods to carry out the research for this service review:
6.2	<p>Documents reviewed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Void Management Guide</li> <li>• Official forms used by the staff in their work</li> <li>• Performance reports</li> <li>• Previous external review of the voids process</li> <li>• Previous CSP voids review</li> <li>• Leaving standard</li> <li>• Tenancy Agreement</li> <li>• Penningtons Asbestos report</li> <li>• Voids complaints spread sheet</li> </ul>
6.3	<p><b>Other methodologies used:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with staff</li> <li>• Work shadowing</li> <li>• Shadowing an Operations Meeting</li> <li>• Benchmarking with other organisations including reviewing web information with Housemark</li> <li>• Visiting properties at various stages of the void process</li> </ul>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>LIST OF ANNEXES</b>
7.1	Notice of Service Review

## Annex - Service Review Notice

**Title: Voids Service Review of Repairs and how they manage this**

### **Purpose:**

- To establish any areas for improvement in voids management
- Investigate areas of poor performance in relation to the process  
Interrogate internal procedures for unnecessary delays or duplication
- Investigate communications elements, both within repairs and to other teams
- To interrogate ways to improve the voids process, saving time and money

### **Evidence used:**

- Performance information – including:
- The average time taken to hand back homes to lettings
- General needs empty property turnaround time
- Cost per void to bring up to the standard
- Number of empty properties over the year 2017/18
- Empty properties as % of stock
- Number of properties becoming empty
- Void loss in year
- Any customer feedback reports
- Information on legislative requirements
- Shadowing

### **Further evidence required:**

- Pre void checks – how these are carried out
- Minutes from Voids meetings
- Voids reports on different types of voids
- Pre-void Assessment Checklist
- Void Policy
- Void Procedure
- Keys procedure

### **Project team and roles:**

- Project team:
  - Lesley Storey, Doreen Howell, Chris Danpure, James Smith;
  - Project Leader – Lesley Storey  
Collate and evaluate data – Lesley Storey, Doreen Howell,  
Chris Danpure & James Smith
  - Scrutiny Panel Champion –Guru Lota
  - Scrutiny Panel Champion for facilitating – Guru Lota

Review start date: 23 April 2018

Review finish date: 11 September 2018

Signed by:

Chair of Scrutiny Panel: .....  
(print name & sign)

Scrutiny Champions: .....  
(print name & sign)

.....

Date: 23 May 2018

Scrutiny panel review number: .....

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### 1. Summary

On 19 September 2017, in the wake of the Grenfell tragedy, Sajid Javid announced the Government's intention to publish a Green Paper on Social Housing. To shape the paper, Ministers met with almost 1,000 residents of social housing at events across the country and the department also reviewed 7,000 online contributions.

The Green Paper ([A new deal for social housing - GOV.UK](#)) was published on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2018 and the Government sees it as representing 'a fundamental shift in the state's approach to social housing and the people who call it home' (which for the purposes of the paper include tenants, leaseholders and shared owners). The paper sets out five principles, which it says will underpin a 'new, fairer deal for social housing residents', and dedicates a chapter to each i.e.:

- a safe and decent home which is fundamental to a sense of security and the ability to get on in life;
- improving and speeding up how complaints are resolved;
- empowering residents and ensuring their voices are heard so that landlords are held to account;
- tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities, challenging the stereotypes that exist about residents and their communities; and
- building the social homes that we need and ensuring that those homes can act as a springboard to home ownership.

The paper is trailed as kick-starting a national conversation about the future of social housing. As such, it seeks views on a range of ideas, rather than setting out firm policy proposals. However, two policy announcements are included i.e.:

- confirmation that the Government will not bring the Higher Value Void Assets provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 into effect;
- the decision not to implement 'at this time' provisions in the Act to restrict the use of lifetime tenancies by local authority landlords.

A major focus of the paper is on strengthening regulation, and a call for evidence has been published, as a first step to a full review of the regulatory approach ([Review of social housing regulation: call for evidence - GOV.UK](#)).

Much of the section on expanding supply refers to existing initiatives/funding rather than putting forward new proposals. However, in speeches to the Conservative Party Conference and to the National Housing Federation, the Prime Minister has subsequently announced the Government's intention to remove the HRA debt cap and its commitment to additional Affordable Housing Programme funding to 2028. The Government has also consulted separately on potential flexibilities over the use of RTB receipts ([Use of receipts from Right to Buy sales - GOV.UK](#)).

The Green Paper includes a set of 48 questions relating to the above principles and invites responses to be submitted by 6<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

## 2. Chapter 1: Ensuring homes are safe and decent

The paper refers to recommendations regarding tenant involvement arising from Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review of building regulations and fire safety. These include giving residents information about building safety and having a resident engagement strategy that sets out arrangements for information-sharing and engagement on safety issues. Proposals in the Green paper include:

- accelerating implementation of these recommendations in the social housing sector;
- developing a new programme to support residents to engage with landlords on safety issues;
- establishing a pilot with landlords to trial options for engaging with residents on safety issues.

The Government wants to use the Green Paper to consider a review of the decent homes standard, which social landlords are required to meet through the regulatory framework. Areas to be considered are:

- whether the decent homes standard is demanding enough and reflects Government priorities;
- whether safety measures that now apply to the private rented sector, covering smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, should also be applied to social housing;
- whether the energy performance of social homes should be upgraded to Energy Performance Certificate Band C by 2030 wherever practical/affordable.

Whilst a review of the standard can be seen as a positive step, particularly in respect of resident safety, any enhancement could have significant financial implications for council housing business plans. The paper is silent on long term financial support to councils to invest in a higher decent homes standard, for example through more flexible borrowing or a specific grant programme.

## 3. Chapter 2: Effective resolution of complaints

The paper recognises that residents must be able to access good complaints processes as well as swift and effective redress through the ombudsman where appropriate. It reports that residents raised concerns that complaints processes are opaque and too slow and that in some cases that they feared the consequences of making a complaint.

The Government wishes to consider what should be done specifically to improve the current complaints process for social housing residents and seeks views on the following:

- removing barriers to redress - strengthening local mediation for disputes and assessing the value of the requirement for a designated person (either a tenant panel, MP or councillor) to consider a case before it can be escalated to the Ombudsman;

- supporting residents to raise complaints - raising awareness of complaint processes and improving tenants' access to advocacy and support;
- speeding up the complaints process – introducing a Code of Practice incorporating specific timescales and having an effective route for escalating safety concerns.

#### **4. Chapter 3: Empowering residents and strengthening the Regulator**

This chapter starts with the premise that for residents to be empowered, they need good information on how their landlord is performing and assurance that their landlord is being assessed against meaningful standards.

To this end, the paper signals a clear intention on the part of the Government to move towards a more stringent regulatory framework for the social housing sector. It also re-opens the debate about providing more choice for social housing residents.

Key proposals or areas for consideration in this chapter include:

- requiring landlords to report key performance indicators to the Regulator, who would publish the information, potentially in the form of league tables;
- measuring satisfaction by asking whether residents would recommend the service to friends and family;
- introducing financial incentives and penalties linked to performance (e.g. access to social housing grant funding);
- reviewing the effectiveness and regulation of current resident engagement and scrutiny measures;
- reviewing and enhancing the regulation of the consumer standards, including the introduction of a Code of Practice;
- enabling the Regulator to take a more rigorous and proactive approach to regulation, strengthening its intervention and enforcement powers;
- potentially giving the Regulator greater scrutiny and enforcement powers over local authority performance and governance;
- exploring options for offering alternative structures to give residents more control and choice – including consideration of a new stock transfer programme to promote the transfer of local authority housing to community-based housing associations; new governance structures that promote resident leadership; supporting residents to take on some services; and allowing them to select from a list of approved contractors.

The proposals have raised concerns in the housing sector regarding both the effectiveness of a national performance regime as a basis for assessing the quality of services and the difficulties in achieving standardised performance measurement and reporting.

Since 2010, the Council's housing services have been subject to a light-touch approach to regulation by the Regulator and the Council has embraced the principles of co-regulation with residents at the local level. Although the paper asks whether engagement and scrutiny arrangements are effective, it does not put forward the option of strengthening scrutiny and co-regulation as an alternative to increasing the powers of the Regulator.

The proposed regulatory review and the renewed focus on options for giving residents more control over services are both likely to lead to increased requirements on the Council, with associated resourcing implications to support compliance with any revised frameworks.

### **5. Chapter 4: Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities**

Stigma and stereotyping was the most consistent theme raised by residents at the engagement events. Residents told ministers that politicians and the media have contributed to the problem with negative language. Others said they were treated with contempt by their landlord.

The paper says that the Government is determined to tackle this prejudice and ensure the positive contribution of social housing residents is recognised.

The Government asserts that proposals within the paper to rebalance the relationship between residents and landlords, along with proposals to increase supply, will contribute to changes in attitudes over time. Additional proposals at the national level to help celebrate communities are limited to:

- awards that recognise the best neighbourhoods, incorporating investment in supporting successful initiatives or funding for events (e.g. street parties);
- sharing positive stories about social housing residents through national campaigns.

At a local level, the focus is on ensuring landlords embed good customer service and neighbourhood management and on the design of new social housing. Views are sought on:

- professionalising the housing management sector (e.g. via qualifications);
- introducing key performance indicators to measure whether landlords are providing good neighbourhood management and their work with partners to tackle ASB;
- reporting by landlords on the social value they deliver (e.g. through financial inclusion, community and employment initiatives);
- promoting good design of new affordable homes to ensure they are of the same quality as other tenures and well-integrated within developments.

Whilst the ambition to tackle the stigma that some residents feel is to be welcomed, there is a lack of acknowledgement within the paper of the complexity

and underlying causes of this issue. A number of commentators have questioned whether the ideas set out above go far enough to address the problem.

### **6. Chapter 5: Expanding supply and supporting home ownership**

This chapter starts by referring to existing plans and targets to increase national housing supply, as set out in the Housing White Paper *Fixing our broken housing market*. It goes on to recognise there remains a long term need for social housing and acknowledges that social housing provides a stable base that supports people when they need it. The Government is also committed to 'extend the opportunity of home ownership to as many social tenants as possible'.

The first section sets out how the Government will support authorities to build more by:

- allowing those councils who bid successfully to borrow more through its additional HRA borrowing programme;
- exploring new flexibilities over how councils spend Right to Buy receipts - this is the subject of a separate consultation paper;
- not requiring councils to make a payment in respect of their vacant higher value council homes.

The paper itself did not commit new investment beyond the £1 billion in additional borrowing headroom that was already the subject of a bidding round. However, the Prime Minister has subsequently announced the Government's intention to remove the HRA debt cap at the Conservative Party conference.

Other elements contained within this chapter are:

- unlocking additional supply through local housing companies – with the caveat that where they are used to provide affordable housing, they should offer an opportunity for tenants to become homeowners;
- boosting community-led housing, overcoming barriers to developing new community-owned homes and supporting resident-led regeneration;
- investigating how to provide longer term funding certainty to help housing associations build more, building on the eight 5-year strategic partnerships announced in July (no additional grant funding is proposed);
- ensuring existing social housing is used efficiently for those who need it most – the paper seeks views on a review to understand social housing allocations, and confirms council flexibility on fixed-term tenancies;
- pressing forward with the large scale pilot of the voluntary RTB and 'portable discount' for housing association tenants;
- developing new shared ownership products and removing barriers that prevent shared owners from building up more equity in their homes (e.g. by reducing the minimum percentage 'stair-casing' requirement).

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## **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, August 2018**

### **A new deal for social housing: consultation questions**

#### **Chapter one - Ensuring homes are safe and decent**

1. How can residents best be supported in the important role of working with landlords to ensure homes are safe?
2. Should new safety measures in the private rented sector also apply to social housing?
3. Are there any changes to what constitutes a decent home that we should consider?
4. Do we need additional measures to make sure social homes are safe and decent?

#### **Chapter two - Effective resolution of complaints**

5. Are there ways of strengthening the mediation opportunities available for landlords and residents to resolve disputes locally?
6. Should we reduce the eight week waiting time to four weeks? Or should we remove the requirement for the 'democratic filter' stage altogether?
7. What can we do to ensure that "designated persons" are better able to promote local resolutions?
8. How can we ensure that residents understand how best to escalate a
9. How can we ensure that residents can access the right advice and support when making a complaint?
10. How can we best ensure that landlords' processes for dealing with complaints are fast and effective?
11. How can we best ensure safety concerns are handled swiftly and effectively within the existing redress framework?

#### **Chapter three - Empowering residents and strengthening the Regulator**

*We consider that key performance indicators should be focused on issues of key importance to residents, covering those identified through our engagement, such as:*

- *Keeping properties in good repair;*
- *Maintaining the safety of buildings;*

- *Effective handling of complaints;*
- *Respectful and helpful engagement with residents; and,*
- *Responsible neighbourhood management, including tackling anti-social behaviour.*

12. Do the proposed key performance indicators cover the right areas? Are there any other areas that should be covered?

13. Should landlords report performance against these key performance indicators every year?

14. Should landlords report performance against these key performance indicators to the Regulator?

15. What more can be done to encourage landlords to be more transparent with their residents?

16. Do you think that there should be a better way of reporting the outcomes of landlords' complaint handling? How can this be made as clear and accessible as possible for residents?

17. Is the Regulator best placed to prepare key performance indicators in consultation with residents and landlords?

18. What would be the best approach to publishing key performance indicators that would allow residents to make the most effective comparison of performance?

19. Should we introduce a new criterion to the Affordable Homes Programme that reflects residents' experience of their landlord? What other ways could we incentivise best practice and deter the worst, including for those providers that do not use Government funding to build?

20. Are current resident engagement and scrutiny measures effective? What more can be done to make residents aware of existing ways to engage with landlords and influence how services are delivered?

21. Is there a need for a stronger representation for residents at a national level? If you answered yes, how should this best be achieved?

22. Would there be interest in a programme to promote the transfer of local authority housing, particularly to community-based housing associations?

23. Could a programme of trailblazers help to develop and promote options for greater resident-leadership within the sector?

24. Are Tenant Management Organisations delivering positive outcomes for residents and landlords? Are current processes for setting up and disbanding Tenant



Management Organisations suitable? Do they achieve the right balance between residents' control and local accountability?

25. Are there any other innovative ways of giving social housing residents greater choice and control over the services they receive from landlords?

26. Do you think there are benefits to models that support residents to take on some of their own services?

27. How can landlords ensure residents have more choice over contractor services, while retaining oversight of quality and value for money?

28. What more could we do to help leaseholders of a social housing landlord?

*Parliament has set the Regulator of Social Housing a consumer objective, which is:*

- *to support the provision of social housing that is well-managed and of appropriate quality;*
- *to ensure that actual or potential tenants of social housing have an appropriate degree of choice and protection;*
- *to ensure that tenants of social housing have the opportunity to be involved in its management and to hold their landlords to account; and,*
- *to encourage registered providers of social housing to contribute to the environmental, social and economic well-being of the areas in which the housing is situated.*

*The Regulator has published four outcome-based consumer standards to deliver the consumer regulation objective. These are:*

1. *The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (July 2017) which includes a requirement for landlords to provide choices and effective communication of information for residents on the delivery of all standards, and to have a clear, simple and accessible complaints procedure.*
2. *The Home Standard (April 2012) which requires homes to be safe, decent and kept in a good state of repair.*
3. *The Tenancy Standard (April 2012) which requires registered providers to let their home in a fair, transparent and efficient way, and enable tenants to gain access to opportunities to exchange their tenancy.*
4. *The Neighbourhood and Community Standard (April 2012) which requires registered providers to keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe; help promote social, environmental and economic well-being in areas where they own homes; and work in partnership with others to tackle anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods where they own homes.*

29. Does the Regulator have the right objective on consumer regulation? Should any of the consumer standards change to ensure that landlords provide a better service for residents in line with the new key performance indicators proposed?

30. Should the Regulator be given powers to produce other documents, such as a Code of Practice, to provide further clarity about what is expected from the consumer standards?

*Where a landlord breaches a consumer standard, the Regulator can only use its regulatory and enforcement powers if there is or may be a “serious detriment” to existing or potential residents. The Regulator interprets this as meaning where there is “serious actual harm or serious potential harm to tenants.”*

31. Is “serious detriment” the appropriate threshold for intervention by the Regulator for a breach of consumer standards?

32. Should the Regulator adopt a more proactive approach to regulation of consumer standards? Should the Regulator use key performance indicators and phased interventions as a means to identify and tackle poor performance against these consumer standards?

33. Should the Regulator have greater ability to scrutinise the performance and arrangements of local authority landlords? If yes, what measures would be appropriate?

*Where a breach of the consumer standards meets the “serious detriment” test, the Regulator will publish a regulatory notice and consider the most appropriate course of action.*

*The Regulator is able to use a number of regulatory and enforcement powers where necessary to ensure compliance with the standards. The Regulator has different tools available depending on the landlord, and has published guidance setting out how it will use its powers. The key powers include:*

*Powers applicable to all landlords :*

- *Survey to assess the condition of stock*
- *Inspection to establish compliance with the regulatory requirements*
- *Hold an Inquiry where it suspects landlord mismanagement*
- *Issue an Enforcement Notice*
- *Requirement to tender some or all of its management functions*
- *Requirement to transfer management of housing to a specified provider*

*Powers applicable only to private registered providers:*

- *Issue Fines*
- *Order payment of compensation to a resident*

- *Appointment of manager to improve performance of the landlord*
- *Transfer land to another provider to improve management of land (following an Inquiry)*
- *Suspension and removal of officers in cases of mismanagement (during or after Inquiry)*
- *Appoint a new officer to address service failure and improve management of company*

*Power applicable only to local authority landlords:*

- *Appoint an adviser to improve performance*

34. Are the existing enforcement measures described above adequate?

35. Is the current framework for local authorities to hold management organisations such as Tenant Management Organisations and Arms Length Management Organisations to account sufficiently robust?

36. What further steps, if any, should Government take to make the Regulator more accountable to Parliament?

#### **Chapter Four - Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities**

*We want to celebrate residents' role in shaping fantastic places by recognising the best neighbourhoods.*

37. How could we support or deliver a best neighbourhood competition?

38. In addition to sharing positive stories of social housing residents and their neighbourhoods, what more could be done to tackle stigma?

39. What is needed to further encourage the professionalisation of housing management to ensure all staff delivers a good quality of service?

40. What key performance indicator should be used to measure whether landlords are providing good neighbourhood management?

41. What evidence is there of the impact of the important role that many landlords are playing beyond their key responsibilities? Should landlords report on the social value they deliver?

42. How are landlords working with local partners to tackle anti-social behaviour? What key performance indicator could be used to measure this work?

*We want to ensure that the revised National Planning Policy Framework is applied to social housing in the right way. In particular we will:*

- *Strengthen planning guidance to take into account the principles of Secured by Design: to ensure that external spaces, parks, streets and courts are well-lit and well maintained so they are safe from crime and the fear of crime.*
- *Strengthen guidance to encourage healthy and active communities: building on the NPPF's healthy and safe communities chapter.*
- *Strengthen guidance to encourage new affordable homes to be designed to the same high-quality as other tenures and well-integrated within developments.*
- *Encourage design that reflects changing needs: for example, inclusive design for an ageing population and family housing at higher densities for effective use of land.*

43. What other ways can planning guidance support good design in the social sector?

44. How can we encourage social housing residents to be involved in the planning and design of new developments?

## **Chapter Five: Expanding supply and supporting home ownership**

45. Recognising the need for fiscal responsibility, this Green Paper seeks views on whether the government's current arrangements strike the right balance between providing grant funding for Housing Associations and Housing Revenue Account borrowing for Local Authorities

46. How we can boost community led housing and overcome the barriers communities experience to developing new community owned homes?

47. What level of additional affordable housing, over existing investment plans, could be delivered by social housing providers if they were given longer term certainty over funding?

48. How can we best support providers to develop new shared ownership products that enable people to build up more equity in their homes?

# The Residents' Network annual conference 2018: Getting ahead of the game

- **Type:** Housing Quality Network (HQN) Event
- **Location:** London
- **Start:** 06 Dec 2018 10:00
- **End:** 06 Dec 2018 16:00



## The Residents' Network annual conference 2018: Getting ahead of the game



**6 December 2018**  
**London**

With the Government's Green Paper placing tenants at the top of the social housing agenda, the

## relationship between residents and landlords has come under the microscope.

But while the majority wait for the Green Paper's proposals to turn into something more concrete, this year's Residents' Network annual conference is getting ahead of the game by showcasing some of the fantastic work already being undertaken by organisations across the country.

Using Green Paper proposals on tenant engagement and empowerment, consumer regulation, new landlord models/structures and complaints as the focus for the day, the one-day event will look at those already showing the way things could be done in these key areas.

Featuring speakers from across housing including practitioners, tenants and other sector experts, this year's annual conference will see the return of workshops as we invite residents and their landlords to demonstrate what they have done to meet the existing standards and how they are evolving to answer the questions posed not just in the Green Paper but in the wider debate by embracing the many advantages of working together.

### **Key themes:**

- The Social Housing Green Paper – what happens next?
- Revamping regulation – what could the league tables for consumer standards look like?
- Getting ahead of the game – how some landlords are already changing direction
- Do the right thing – best practice workshops from residents and landlords covering:
  - Tenant engagement and empowerment
  - Putting tenants at the heart of decision-making – new model and structures
  - The value of co-production
  - Who's getting complaints right?

**Key note speaker:** Jane Everton, Deputy Director and Social Housing Green Paper lead, Ministry of Housing and Local Government

### **Background**

Over the last three Residents' Network annual conferences, the speakers and sessions have focused on better ways to reach residents, and follow the principles laid down in the 'consumer standards' maintained by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Huge changes in the way that the Government seems to view social housing have brought about reviews of the way landlords and tenants share responsibility and powers for shaping the direction of organisations. At the same time, the fabric of the regulations and how they are implemented is also under review.

For years the regulator has taken a 'light touch' approach and this has meant a degree of freedom for landlord and resident teams in the way they interpret the things we think of as involvement and empowerment.

Leaving it to individual organisations allows for flexibility – we all know one size doesn't fit all for staff or tenants – but this year's conference asks what are the steps everyone can take today, before any rules or regulations change, to meet the call for tenants to be given more power?

**Delegate fees:**

Full price (staff): **£199\***

Residents' Network members (staff): **£175\***

Full price (residents): **£119\***

Residents' Network members (residents): **One free place, £119\* for additional places**

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