

**TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PANEL**  
**16 October 2018**

**Lead Officer:** Hazel Simmonds, Director of Homes, Districts and Regeneration

**Wards:** All

**Agenda Item:**

**Subject: - "A New Deal for Social Housing" Green Paper – Overview**

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**1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report and to comment on the proposals set out in the social housing green paper.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The social housing green paper, "A New Deal for Social Housing," was published in August 2018 along with a call for evidence in relation to social housing regulation. Consultation on the contents of the paper closes on 6 November.
- 2.2 The green paper is also accompanied by a separate consultation on the use by local authorities of Right to Buy receipts. This ends on 9 October.
- 2.3 This paper summarises the principles and proposals contained in the green paper.
- 2.4 At the time of writing this paper, Croydon Council is in the process of preparing its responses to the green paper, the call for evidence and the Right to Buy consultation.

**3. Context**

- 3.1 Nearly one fifth of households (equivalent to about nine million people) live in social rented housing in England. Just under a half of social rented housing is owned by local authorities. Croydon Council owns just under 14,000 socially rented homes.
- 3.2 Nationally, the number of households who rent from a social landlord who are in work is increasing. In 2010/11, 32% of households renting from a social landlord were in full or part-time work. Today this figure is 43% (58% for social renters of working age).
- 3.3 Between 300,000 and 400,000 social rented homes are let in England each

year, meaning that about 8% change hands annually. Nationally, movement from the social housing sector to other sectors is low. In 2016/17, about 36,000 households moved from social housing to the private rented sector, while 18,000 households exercised the right to buy. The 2017 British Attitudes Survey suggested two thirds of social tenants would prefer to own their home.

1

#### **4. Detail**

- 4.1 The social housing green paper was published in August 2018. A green paper is a consultation document produced by the Government. The aim of a green paper is to allow people both inside and outside Parliament to give feedback on policy or legislative proposals.
- 4.2 The full paper can be found at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/733605/A\\_new\\_deal\\_for\\_social\\_housing\\_web\\_accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733605/A_new_deal_for_social_housing_web_accessible.pdf)
- 4.3 The green paper is underpinned by five principles. The principles are:
- a safe and decent home which is fundamental to a sense of security and our 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.
- 4.4 Specific proposals within the paper include:
- Reviews of standards for social housing and social housing regulation, including the decent homes standard;
  - League tables of social landlords based on customer satisfaction and other performance indicators;
  - No sale of high value stock by local authorities;
  - Some flexibility over use by councils of right to buy receipts;
  - Continued lifetime tenancies for new council tenants (unless local authorities choose to offer fixed term tenancies);
  - More opportunity for residents to raise concerns about building safety, with faster resolution of complaints;
  - Tackling stigma and embedding good customer service and neighbourhood management;
  - A possible transfer of local authority housing to housing associations.

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1 National statistics throughout section 3 are taken from “Briefing: The social housing green paper” published by the LGiU, 20/08/18, <https://www.lgiu.org.uk/briefing/the-social-housing-green-paper/>

## **Reviews of standards for social housing and social housing regulation**

- 4.5 The Regulator of Social Housing requires that social homes meet the Decent Homes Standard. Currently 99.7% of Croydon Council homes meet the Decent Homes Standard. The standard, which was last reviewed in 2006, requires homes to be:
- free of hazards that pose a risk to residents
  - to be in a reasonable state of repair
  - to have reasonably modern facilities and services such as kitchens and bathrooms and efficient heating and effective insulation.
- 4.6 Whilst the paper does not set out what could be included in a new standard, fire safety standards are specifically mentioned. The example is given of changes to drive up safety in the private rented sector that haven't been applied to the social housing sector such as regulation regarding electrical testing and fire/carbon monoxide alarms.

## **League tables of social landlords based on customer satisfaction and other performance indicators**

- 4.7 The paper proposes that landlords are assessed against “a number of agreed and meaningful key performance indicators which will be made publically available in a way that enables easy comparison.” The paper goes on to state that these should be focused on areas that are important to residents and gives the examples of:
- “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.”

## **No sale of high value stock by local authorities**

- 4.8 For some years there has been uncertainty about the government's proposal to require local authorities to sell high value stock. The Green Paper proposes that no sale of high value stock will be required by local authorities.

## **An increase to the borrowing cap and some flexibility over use by councils of right to buy receipts**

- 4.9 A consultation paper has been published alongside the green paper which sets out proposed changes to the way local authorities can use Right to Buy receipts to deliver new homes. A range of options are proposed including:
- increasing the timeframe for the use of Right to Buy receipts
  - allowing a greater proportion of the cost of new Social Rent council homes in areas of high affordability pressure to be met through Right to Buy receipts
  - allowing greater flexibility over the tenure of replacements – to include

shared ownership as well as Affordable Rent and Social Rent.

- 4.10 The paper also sets out proposals in relation to encouraging home building, community-led housing schemes, resident led estate regeneration and routes to affordable home ownership.

**Continued lifetime tenancies for new council tenants (unless local authorities choose to offer fixed term tenancies)**

- 4.11 The Government introduced changes in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to restrict the use of lifetime tenancies by local authority landlords, requiring local authorities instead to grant tenancies on a fixed term basis and review these. These changes are not yet in force.
- 4.12 The government has decided not to implement the provisions in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 at this time.
- 4.13 The paper states that how social landlords use fixed term tenancies should “be decided at the local level, in consultation with residents, the wider community, and other social landlords in the area, in order to get the right balance between providing security for individuals and communities, and making best use of the homes available.” Particular mention is made of lifetime tenancies for residents who are moving as a result of domestic abuse.

**More opportunity for residents to raise concerns about building safety, with faster resolution of complaints**

- 4.14 The paper states, “Residents should have a stronger voice to influence decisions and challenge their landlord to improve performance. They must also be able to access good complaints processes, as well as swift and effective redress where appropriate.”
- 4.15 Proposals include support residents to raise complaints, speeding up the complaints process, listening to residents’ views and ensuring customer feedback is used to improve services. The paper also makes special mention of leaseholder concerns and states that a sector advisory group will “explore how social leaseholders can better input into consultation on major works.”

**Tackling stigma and embedding good customer service and neighbourhood management**

- 4.16 The paper supports the professionalisation of housing management to ensure all staff deliver a good quality of service.
- 4.17 Tackling anti-social behaviour, providing financial inclusion and employment support and signposting residents to other service are all given as examples of how landlords can add further value and tackle stigma. In addition, focusing on the design and quality of homes and their surrounding area is recognised as being “important to wellbeing, integration, tackling stigma and encouraging existing communities to accept new homes in their area.”

## **A possible transfer of local authority housing to housing associations.**

- 4.18 The paper also states “We are considering a new stock transfer programme to promote the transfer of local authority housing particularly to community-based housing associations.”

## **5. Review of social housing regulation call for evidence**

- 5.1 The paper also states: “Delivering good quality and safe social homes with the right services from landlords relies on a robust regulatory framework. It is nearly eight years since the last review of social housing regulation, and the proposals in this Green Paper present the opportunity to look afresh at the regulatory framework.
- 5.2 Alongside this Green Paper, we are publishing a Call for Evidence which seeks views on how the current regulatory framework is operating. This Call for Evidence, along with questions about regulation in the following chapters, will inform what regulatory changes are required to deliver regulation that is fit for purpose.”

## **6 Responding to the consultation and the call for evidence**

- 6.1 The Right to Buy consultation ends on 9 October 2018.
- 6.2 The consultation on the green paper and the call for evidence both run until 11.45pm on 6 November 2018. The government is keen to hear from a wide range of interested parties including residents, landlords and lenders, in regards to both. Residents can submit their responses via online surveys or can complete a response form which can be emailed to:  
[socialhousingreview@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:socialhousingreview@communities.gsi.gov.uk)  
or posted to:  
Affordable Housing Regulation and Investment Division,  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government,  
3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

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Report Author: Kirsteen Roe, Head of Assets and Involvement,  
E-mail: [Kirsteen.Roe@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Kirsteen.Roe@croydon.gov.uk), Tel: 020 8604 7205

Contact Person: As above