



TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:	Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper
SLT Lead:	Patrick Odling-Smee, Director of Housing
Report Author and contact details:	Gill Butler, Head of Housing Strategy and Service Development
Policy context:	The introduction of Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper
Financial summary:	It is anticipated that the implementation of the recommendations of this paper will not have any direct financial implications, other than what is already set out within other Housing related strategies

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

The Government published their 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' (White Paper) in November 2020. This document seeks to inform readers of the seven key priorities for providers of social housing and new powers for the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) and Housing Ombudsman, to hold social landlords to account.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Adjudication and Review Board consider and give us feedback regarding the content of this report and our proposals for meeting

the **Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper** and associated legislation.

Papers Attached: - Appendix 1 - **Charter for Social Housing Residents.**

REPORT DETAIL

1. **Background and context**

1.1 Following the sad events of the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, and the subsequent public enquiry, the Government's green paper, '*A New Deal for Social Housing*', and their '*Fixing our broken housing market*' consultation took place in 2018. This led in November 2020 to the publication of a new '**Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper**'. This document sets out seven key priorities for providers of social housing and new powers for the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) and Housing Ombudsman to hold social landlords to account.

These are: -

- ***To be safe in your home.***
- ***To know how your landlord is performing***
- ***To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.***
- ***To be treated with respect***
- ***To have your voice heard by your landlord***
- ***To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in***
- ***To be supported to take your first step to ownership.***

1.2 The RSH derives its powers from the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and its stated objectives are to undertake economic regulation of providers of social housing, focusing on governance, financial viability, and value for money. As identified in this report, the White Paper suggests that the direction of travel is for the regulator to have wider powers in enforcing a revised Consumer Standard and Code of Practice.

1.3 Alongside a review of the current Consumer Standards, the RSH has been consulting on the introduction of a national set of 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures' to be introduced in summer 2022, with first year of collection commencing in April 2023. The Committee may wish to ensure that the indicators that are reported are consistent with the tenant satisfaction measures proposed by the RSH. Consultation is continuing into the final form of those measures. Local Authority and ALMO landlords are being treated the same as any other Registered Housing Provider in meeting the required regulatory standards and a new inspection regime is expected at least every four years.

Jane Everton, Deputy Director of Social Housing at DLUHC (formerly MHCLG) - speaking at last year's HQN conference said: "Government is re-booting consumer

regulation to ensure landlords adopt the right behaviours and can be held to account for their actions by tenants. **This is the heart of the White Paper”.**

2. Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper and associated legislation compliance.

To be safe in your home

2.1 A cornerstone of the Housing White Paper is a focus on health and safety, compliance, accountability and transparency, and tenant empowerment.

2.2 The government’s Building Safety Bill (published July 2020) has the intention of overhauling the building regulations in England and Wales. The Bill’s objective is to strengthen the whole regulatory system for building safety both for existing and future buildings. Although the comprehensive new building safety regime will specifically govern the design, construction and occupation of what are classed ‘higher-risk’ buildings, there is an expectation that housing providers will apply the commitments of this important legislation across their portfolio of properties. The Bill is expected to become law, assuming there are no major delays, sometime early in 2022, by when the housing industry has to demonstrate compliance and the Building Safety Regulator will establish the regime.

2.3 The Fire Safety Bill which was brought about as a result of the concerns raised around fire safety following the Grenfell enquiry, is now the Fire Safety Act 2021, having received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021, but is not yet in force. Housing providers are expected to demonstrate full compliance to this legislation.

2.4 The White Paper also seeks to make some changes to the current ‘Decent Homes Standard’. DLUHC has recently sought input from Housing Providers on the requirement in the existing Standard that the property be in a ‘reasonable state of repair’ - criterion (b). A property is in a ‘non-decent state of repair’ if: -

- *One or more key building components are old and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair.*
- *Two or more other building components are old and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair.*

The housing industry appear to be in agreement that the requirement of ‘a reasonable state of repair’ is an important criterion in the Decent Homes Standard, however the debate therefore centres on not the criterion itself but the way it will be defined in the revised Standard.

2.5 Havering Housing Services have just developed a new Asset Management Strategy (signed-off by Cabinet 20 October 2021), that sets out our approach to the management of assets within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The principles that underpin our Asset Management Strategy are: -

- *Invest in our homes so they are well maintained, warm, safe and attractive to residents*

- *Contribute to delivery of the Council's carbon neutral plans*
- *Provide a social housing stock that matches future demographic and social needs in balanced communities*
- *To reduce inequality by providing homes and services that meet needs of diverse communities*
- *Ensure we derive good value for money from our housing and non-residential stock*
- *Contribute to an overall increase in the number of properties available to rent (sub market)*
- *Ensure we meet our legal and contractual obligations as a social landlord*
- *Make decisions based on quality information about our assets and our customers*
- *Ensure our asset management strategy is affordable within the business plan*
- *To place residents are at the heart of our decision making and influencing the delivery and monitoring of all services.*

3. Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper and associated legislation compliance.

- 3.1 The Housing directorate has been actively preparing for changes in regulation for the past two years. Another feature of the White Paper includes the removal of the 'Democratic Filter' for social housing residents that will enable easier access to the Housing Ombudsman for swift redress of complaints and service failures.
- 3.2 In December 2020 we published our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's new Code of Complaint Handling and we have developed a robust Improvement plan based on learning from complaints.
- 3.3 We have been taking part in seminars, workshops and consultation over changes in housing legislation, and engaging with the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH), as they develop their Consumer Standards and the proposed new 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures', or KPIs, that all social housing providers will need to meet.
- 3.4 We are developing a new **Housing Resident Engagement Strategy – Respecting our Residents** - that sets out how we want to improve communication and engagement with our council tenants and leaseholders, as well as the wider community, over the next 5 years.
- 3.5 Commitment four of the 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' specifically states residents should expect:- ***"To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants."***
- 3.6 Commitment five states:- ***"To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The Government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens."***
- 3.7 The new Housing Resident Engagement Strategy Vision statement: -

“All residents feel satisfied that they are respected by the Council Housing Service.”

Aims of the strategy: -

- *To develop a collaborative resident engagement culture within Housing*
 - *To engage and involve residents to help us improve services*
 - *To deliver a right first time service.*
 - *To embrace digital communication and engagement.*
- 3.8 The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy is progressing and in December we will be drafting this in co-production with residents, to be forwarded for Cabinet approval in 2022.
- 3.9 Following the recommendations from a Performance Reporting Framework review carried out by independent Housing benchmarking organisation HouseMark in May 2021, we have developed an action that sets out short, medium and long term actions that we plan to take to drive a performance management culture across Housing.
- 3.10 In line with Havering Council's approach to performance management as set out in the new corporate framework, we are working to develop our own Performance Reporting Framework that provides clear guidance on how performance is managed, monitored, reviewed and reported at all levels within Housing Services and how this links in to the organisational reporting.
- 3.11 We are looking to develop our headline Housing Services KPIs for 2022/23 and beyond, which should themselves also reflect the new regulation Tenant Satisfaction Measures and provide open and transparent performance information to our staff, residents and stakeholders.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: As noted above There is no expected additional financial expenditure arising from implementation of the recommendations of this paper other than what specific service areas have set out in the own budgets.

Legal implications and risks: It is noted that the Charter for Social Housing is a Government White Paper and that regulatory changes are proposed arising from this. Any changes to Regulations/ introduction of new Regulations should be monitored so that the Council's response can be varied as necessary once Regulations are implemented to ensure compliance

Human Resources implications and risks: This paper is for briefing only and the report recommendations do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the council or its workforce.

Equalities implications and risks: Service areas will be developing strategies to respond the changes in legislation and recommendations of the white paper. Individual service areas will prepare comprehensive EQHIA's which seek to ensure no protected characteristics are negatively impacted. A separate EQHIA is not required for this briefing paper.