

# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP ON 4 FEBRUARY 2021

### PART A : REPORT

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Social Housing White Paper - The Charter for Social Housing Residents</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	January 2021
<b>EXTN:</b>	37740
<b>PORTFOLIO AREA:</b>	Residential Services

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides Members with a summary of the Social Housing White Paper which was published in November 2020.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

Housing and Customer Services Working Group is asked to note the contents of the white paper.

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 On the 17 November 2020 The Government published the Social Housing White Paper: The Charter for Social Housing Residents. This has been developed following the publication of the Social Housing Green Paper in August 2018 which set out a proposed strategy for reforming social housing and rebalancing the relationship between residents and landlords.
- 1.2 The White Paper sets out proposals of what the Government will do to ensure that landlords live up to the new charter. The main step is work they will do with the Regulator of Social Housing, strengthening the formal standards against which landlords are regulated against. Throughout the paper there is a real drive to create a strong consumer regulatory regime
- 1.3 The White Paper sets out a new seven-point charter which every social housing resident should be able to expect from their landlord.
  - a) To be safe in your home
  - b) To know your landlord is performing

- c) To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- d) To be treated with respect
- e) To have your voice heard by your landlord
- f) To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- g) To be supported to take your first step to ownership

#### **1.4 To be safe in your home**

- a) Legislate to strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer regulation objectives to explicitly include safety.
- b) Legislate to require social landlords to identify a nominated person responsible for complying with their health and safety requirements.
- c) Launch a consultation on mandating smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in social housing.
- d) Consult on measures to ensure that social housing residents are protected from harm caused by poor electrical safety.
- e) Build on the work of the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group, supporting the development of statutory and good practice guidance on engaging residents in all tenures on safety issues.

#### **1.5 To know how your landlord is performing**

- a) Expect the Regulator of Social Housing to develop a process for collecting and publishing a core set of tenant satisfaction measures for all social landlords referred to in Appendix A.
- b) Landlords will be required to report on several tenant satisfaction measures on things that matter to tenants, for example, compliance with the Decent Homes standard, safety, overall satisfaction with repairs, complaints, being respectful and helpful, satisfaction with the upkeep of communal areas etc
- c) Ensure landlords provide a clear breakdown of how their income is being spent, including levels of executive remuneration and management costs relative to size of the landlord to be published alongside their tenant satisfaction measures.
- d) Require landlords to identify a senior person in their organisation who is responsible for ensuring they comply with the consumer standards set by the

Regulator of Social Housing.

- e) Expect landlords to report to every tenant on such matters at least once a year, if not continuously and the wider use of technology.

**1.6 To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly**

- a) Support improved complaint handling by landlords and hold them to account through stronger action by the Housing Ombudsman.
- b) Keep the Housing Ombudsman's powers, and compliance with them, under review and consider ways to strengthen them, including the option of legislation to put the Complaint Handling Code on a statutory footing.
- c) Run an awareness campaign so social housing residents know their rights, are confident in navigating their routes to complain, and are aware of how to escalate to get redress where needed.
- d) From March 2021, publish on the Housing Ombudsman's website, reports on the complaints the Housing Ombudsman has handled for individual landlords, as well as the determinations on individual cases.
- e) Remove the 'democratic filter' by removing the need for residents to go to a designated person or wait eight weeks before approaching the Housing Ombudsman.
- f) Landlords will be required to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, ensuring that they have good processes in place to respond swiftly and effectively to complaints. Code comes into effect 1 January 2021.

**1.7 To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants.**

- a) Transform the Regulator of Social Housing so it proactively monitors and drives landlords' compliance with its consumer standards.
- b) Remove the 'serious detriment test' and introduce routine inspections for the largest landlords (with over 1,000 homes) every four years.
- c) Change the Regulator of Social Housing's objectives to explicitly cover safety and transparency, and work with it to review its consumer standards to ensure they are up to date and deliver its revised objectives.

- d) Give the Regulator of Social Housing the power to publish a Code of Practice on the consumer standards to be clearer on what landlords are required to deliver.
- e) Strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's enforcement powers to tackle failing landlords and to respond to new challenges facing the sector, by removing the cap on the level of fines it can issue, introducing Performance Improvement Plans for landlords failing to comply, reducing the notice period for surveys on the condition of properties, and introducing a new power to arrange emergency repairs if needed where a survey uncovers evidence of systemic landlord failures.
- f) Make it explicit that provisions in contracts between local authorities and Arm's Length Management Organisations or Tenant Management Organisations would be deemed void if they hindered the Regulator of Social Housing in its exercise of its powers.
- g) Review the statutory Right to Manage guidance.
- h) Set out an expectation for all landlords to self-refer breaches with the regulatory standards.

#### **1.8 To have your voice heard by your landlord**

- a) Expect the Regulator of Social Housing to require landlords to show how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenant engagement
- b) Deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence their landlords and hold them to account.
- c) Review professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service.

#### **1.9 To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in**

- a) Review the Decent Homes Standard, and consider whether it needs to be updated to ensure it is delivering what is needed for safety and decency now, including how it can better support the decarbonisation and energy efficiency of social homes, and improve communal and green spaces.
- b) Review professionalisation to consider how well housing staff are equipped to work with people with mental health needs and encourage best practice for

landlords working with those with mental health needs.

- c) Clarify the roles of agencies involved in tackling anti-social behaviour and signpost tenants to those agencies who can give them the most appropriate support and assistance when faced with anti-social behaviour.
- d) Consider the results of the allocations evidence collection exercise findings to ensure that housing is allocated in the fairest way possible and achieves the best outcomes for local places and communities
- e) We will work with the National Housing Federation and Local Government Association to encourage social landlords to inform residents of their right to make a community trigger application, and where appropriate, that they act as an advocate in supporting tenants to take an application forward with the relevant authority.
- f) We will expect the Regulator of Social Housing to review and amend its regulatory standards to make it clear that landlords should have a policy setting out how they should tackle issues surrounding domestic abuse

#### **1.10 To be supported to take you first step to ownership**

- a) Introduced a new shared ownership model that will be fairer, more consumer-friendly and more accessible. Reducing minimum stake to 10% and the landlord being responsible for repairs for first 10 years.
- b) Announced that around half of the homes delivered by the new Affordable Homes Programme will be for affordable home ownership.
- c) Announced a new Right to Shared Ownership, meaning that most new grant-funded housing association homes for rent will give residents the opportunity to purchase a 10% (or more) stake in their home and to purchase further shares in future.
- d) Amended the National Planning Policy Framework and published a new national design guide to emphasise the importance of beauty and good design.
- e) We are keen for local authorities to take advantage of funding available through the Affordable Homes Programme. We want to see local authorities share experiences and good practice in housebuilding, so they are well placed to build

## **2.0 PROPOSAL(S):**

2.1 Members note the contents of this report.

<b>3.0 OPTIONS:</b>		
3.1 There are no other options to consider at this stage.		
<b>4.0 CONSULTATION:</b>		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify) Members of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group	✓	
<b>5.0 ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Financial		✓
Legal		✓
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability	✓	
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology	✓	
Other (please explain)		
<b>6.0 IMPLICATIONS:</b>		
N/A		

**7.0 REASON FOR THE DECISION:**

**8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS:**  
N/A