



Housing Services Cabinet Committee

Tuesday, 23 March 2021

Dear Councillor

Please be advised that the presentation made at the above meeting of the Housing Services Cabinet Committee in relation to agenda item 4 - Social Housing White Paper Briefing Paper is set out below for your information.

Yours faithfully



S Walsh  
Service Manager (Communities)

**List of documents attached**

4. Social Housing White Paper - Briefing Paper (Pages 3 - 12)

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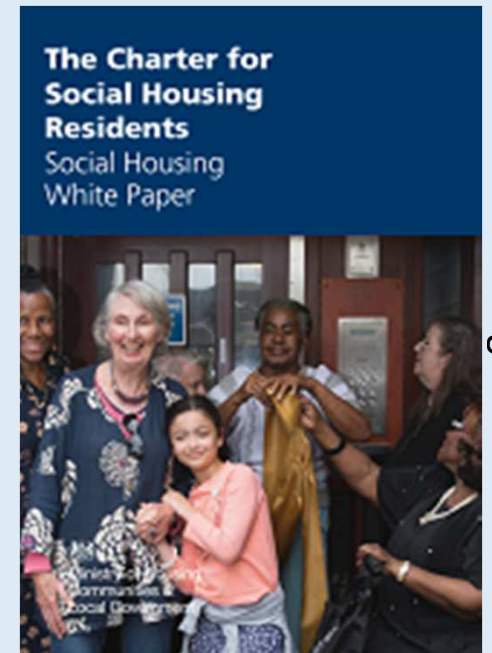
## Social Housing White Paper - A Charter for Social Housing Residents

*Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of*

# Introduction

The Charter for Social Housing Residents was published on the 17 November 2020 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government with the promise of stronger consumer rights alongside more opportunities for tenants to scrutinise social landlords.

Whilst not the sole reason for the new Charter, much reference is made to the Grenfell tragedy, resulting in Ministers pledging tougher regulation for social landlords, with tenants better able to hold their landlord account.



# Proposals

The main proposals in the Charter are to:

1. Ensure routine inspections for larger landlords (over 1,000 units) every four years.
2. Expand the remit of the Regulator of Social Housing to include building safety.
3. Strengthen the Regulator's enforcement powers to tackle failing landlords.
4. Require social landlords to identify a named person responsible for health and safety.
5. Create tenant satisfaction measures for social landlords.
6. Ensure landlords provide a breakdown on how their income is spent.
7. Increase the role of the Housing Ombudsman and how it works with the new Building Safety Regulator

# Promises

1. **To be safe in your home.** We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
2. **To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
4. **To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
5. **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.
6. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,** with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

# Obligations

Promise	Obligation	Action Required to meet obligation	Departmental responsibility
<b>To be safe in your home</b>	Tenants automatically receive information regarding fire and structural protection measures in their building and are provided with information to help them understand and fulfil their safety obligations.	Tenant Handbook to be updated by to ensure that tenants are notified from the outset of both tenant and landlord safety obligations and risk management measures.	Housing Landlord Services - Housing and Operations
	Tenants living in a higher risk building can access a Building Safety Case Report.	Gravesham have 5 identified higher risk buildings. Building Safety Reports need to be produced for these buildings.	DSO Building Management – Housing and Operations
	Tenants have a quick and effective route to make a complaint regarding fire and structural safety.	None – tenants can already achieve this via the Corporate Complaints Procedure.	Town Centre and Cultural Services
	The proposed installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each storey of a premise with a room used as living accommodation.	None – programmes are already in place to achieve this obligation.	DSO Building Management – Housing and Operations

# Obligations

Promise	Obligation	Action Required to meet obligation	Departmental responsibility
<p>To know how your landlord is performing</p>	<p>To record and report data relating to tenant satisfaction to the Regulator of Social Housing on at least an annual basis.</p>	<p>For Housing Services to take responsibility for collecting and completing the tenant satisfaction measures to return to the Regulator.</p> <p>Tenant Satisfaction Measures to be included within the Tenant Engagement Strategy.</p>	<p>Housing Landlord Services - Housing and Operations</p> <p>Housing Landlord Services - Housing and Operations</p>
	<p>To have an identified, published 'responsible person' at a senior level to ensure compliance with the Consumer Standards and Code of Practice set out by the Regulator of Social Housing</p>	<p>For a responsible person to be identified and published.</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer</p>
	<p>To produce a report to tenants on at least an annual basis informing tenants as to how their landlord is performing.</p>	<p>To expand the annual DSO Building Management Report to include of all housing services and performance.</p>	<p>Housing Landlord Services - Housing and Operations</p> <p>DSO Building Management – Housing and Operations</p> <p>Communications</p>



# Obligations

Promise	Obligation	Action Required to meet obligation	Departmental responsibility
To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly	Landlords will be expected to comply with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code by March 2021.	Review of the current complaint process to include tenant involvement in the third stage.	Town Centre and Cultural Services
		Lesson learnt reporting to Housing Committee, to be published on the Council’s website and via Your Home.	Town Centre and Cultural Services
To be treated with respect	Landlords expected to comply with the new routine of inspections from the Regular including desk top reviews and four yearly inspections.	None – implementation of all other actions will ensure that the Council are prepared for any inspection.	Housing and Operations
	Landlords to ensure that they are self-reporting any breaches of consumer standards directly to the regulator.	Director of Housing and Operations to take responsibility for reporting any breaches.	Housing and Operations.

# Obligations

Promise	Obligation	Action Required to meet obligation	Departmental responsibility
To have your voice heard by your landlord	Landlords to be able to evidence how they have sought to improve engagement with tenants.	Tenant Engagement Strategy to be developed within the next three months setting out exactly how we are going to improve how we engage with our tenants.	Housing Landlord Services – Housing and Operations
	Review of professional training and development for staff with minimum standards required for social housing staff.	<p>For Housing staff to continue working with peer groups to continually seek best practice.</p> <p>For Housing staff to develop its corporate membership with the CIH to establish a set of standards for each role within the department, utilising the CIH to provide the training for this.</p>	<p>Housing and Operations</p> <p>Housing and Operations</p>

# Obligations

Promise	Obligation	Action Required to meet obligation	Departmental responsibility
To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in	A Government review of the Decent Homes Standard.	None at present as this review has not yet been carried out and we are confident our homes currently meet Decent Homes Standard.	DSO Building Management – Housing and Operations
	To ensure that housing is allocated in the fairest way possible.	None – our Housing Allocations Policy has recently been updated to ensure that we are allocating properties in the fairest way possible.	Housing Needs and Allocations – Housing and Operations
To be supported to take your first step to ownership	<p>A Government review of the Leasehold Management via the Leasehold Reform Programme.</p> <p>Legislation will be changed in relation to grounds rent and is likely to become law within twelve months.</p>	Ensure that Housing Services update their policies and procedures when new legislation comes into effect to ensure that all leasehold services are legal and compliant.	Housing and Operations

# Conclusion

Whilst there is a significant amount of work required to ensure that we meet the new obligations set out by the Regulator of Social Housing; the changes made within Housing Services over the last four years have placed the authority in a good starting position to build on the achievements to date and to take forward and implement the new obligations placed on the Housing Service through the white paper.