

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 26 March 2019

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None

**Review date for release** None



**Agenda item:** 19

**Subject:** **Together with Tenants National Housing Federation**

**Purpose of report:** This report draws attention to the National Housing Federation (NHF) publication and consultation – Together with Tenants. This document has been produced in response to the Housing Green Paper and the aftermath of the Grenfell tragedy. Whilst the document is intended for housing associations, there is much of value to our tenant involvement and Housing Review Board agenda.

**Recommendation:** **To follow the progress of the National Housing Federation project Together with Tenants, and import good practice recommendations that are relevant to East Devon.**

**Reason for recommendation:** To consider emerging good practice in the sector following concerns about involving and listening to tenants views, and introduce changes that are appropriate to our model of operation to continually improve our tenant involvement in service delivery.

**Officer:** John Golding Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment  
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**Financial implications:** No specific financial implications.

**Legal implications:** Continuing advice from Legal as to whether any proposed Governance changes are aligned with current EDDC Constitutional arrangements.

**Equalities impact:** Medium Impact  
If choosing High or Medium level outline the equality considerations here, which should include any particular adverse impact on people with protected characteristics and actions to mitigate these. Link to an equalities impact assessment form using the [equalities form template](#).

**Risk:** Low Risk

**Links to background information:** .

**Link to Council Plan:** Encouraging communities to be outstanding.

## **1. Background and purpose**

- 1.1 The Government's Social Housing Green Paper – A New Deal for Social Housing – was published on 14 August 2018. It draws extensively from a Government listening exercise in which ministers heard the views of social housing tenants across the country, and touches on issues exposed following the Grenfell Tower fire. It also draws on external research and intelligence on tenant involvement.
- 1.2 The Green Paper is structured around five themes:
  - Ensuring homes are safe and decent
  - Effective resolution of complaints
  - Empowering residents and strengthening the regulator
  - Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities
  - Expanding supply and supporting home ownership.
- 1.3 The Green Paper addresses a range of issues that affect housing associations, on issues such as safety, supply and the stigma of social housing tenants. At its heart however is a desire to rebalance the relationship between social housing tenants and their landlords – looking at issues such as complaints procedures, transparency and accountability.
- 1.4 The Green Paper sets out proposals of how these issues could be addressed, including through increased regulatory oversight and performance standards. It also references the Offer for Tenants work (now known as Together with Tenants) that we are already doing as a sector, which offers an important sector-led response to the challenges around accountability and transparency.
- 1.5 There is an opportunity for strengthening the relationship between housing associations and their tenants and residents. Housing associations (and other social housing providers) work hard to create a positive relationship with their tenants and residents, alongside aiming to provide safe, decent and affordable homes. The sector has a longstanding commitment to engaging with tenants and residents, and there are many great examples of how housing associations have shaped their organisations around the needs and views of the people they house.
- 1.6 However, housing associations (and other social landlords) know they do not always get it right for everyone, and are not always as accountable as they should be to their tenants and residents. They also recognise the lack of consistency between landlords. Some tenants and residents have said their landlord feels distant and this has led to a lack of trust in housing associations in some places.
- 1.7 The National Housing Federation has been working with tenants, residents, tenant representative groups, NHF members and others to understand what practical change is needed to address this. To drive action, they have created a four-point plan for delivering change across the sector.
- 1.8 The NHF had previously called this work 'Offer for Tenants', but following extensive conversations and feedback they decided to rename it Together with Tenants – a name that reflects the ambition to build a collaborative, balanced relationship between housing associations and their tenants and residents.
- 1.9 The National Housing Federation have developed a draft plan for strengthening the relationship between housing associations and their tenants and residents. The overriding ambition of Together with Tenants is to strengthen the relationship between housing associations and their tenants and residents.

1.10 Following a large number of conversations, workshops and meetings with members, tenants, residents and stakeholders, they have developed a four-point plan for delivering this an ambition. The four actions are:

1. **A new requirement in our Code of Governance** for boards to be accountable to their tenants and residents.
2. **A new charter** setting out what tenants and residents can expect from their housing association landlord.
3. **Tenant and resident oversight and scrutiny** of the charter with a report on how their landlord is doing against charter commitments.
4. **A closer link with regulation.**

I have reproduced the initial proposals in **annex 1**.

1.11 Whilst this project is primarily intended as a housing association initiative, I think there is a lot we can learn from the proposals. I am suggesting that we follow the project and use some of the recommendations to strengthen the work of the Housing Review Board and rejuvenate our tenant involvement processes.