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Date: 4th September 2009

Your ref:

Our ref: RVL/EH

Please ask for: R V Livermore

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Amanda Newton
National Conversation Project Manager
Tenant Services Authority
4th Floor
One Piccadilly Gardens
Manchester
M1 1RG

Dear Amanda

I am responding to the TSA Discussion Paper on Building a new Regulatory Framework.

The Council have held a Workshop, as recommended by the TSA, and I attach a copy of this and the covering letter sent in support of this.

The National Conversation findings accord with the Council's experience of working with Tenants over a number of years.

Your approach to regulation is probably the only sensible way that this matter can move forward within the current paradigm. However, the Council believes fundamentally that this will allow a two tier approach whereby service enhancements will be restricted and Tenants will not be able to aspire to the same level of services dependent on their landlord.

The National Standards are of some concern as, from a Local Authority view point, resources have been agreed with Government on the level of performance monitoring and we would not wish to see these become more burdensome.

In regard to the issue of tenants with care and support needs, we do need to ensure that there is not duplication with the regulatory framework governing Social Services.

.....continued.....

With regard to the two tier arrangements you propose, under the current system we see no alternative but would prefer that there be a level financial base for all social landlords.

The intervention and enforcement powers will, in our opinion, lead to landlords being cautious about setting aspirational standards.

In shaping the standards the TSA need to avoid on size fitting all and allow tenants to decide between a range of options what is their priority.

In terms of tenant empowerment and involvement, we feel that the Tenant Compacts need to be further developed to encourage involvement but to ensure that all tenants are able to influence service delivery aspects without the need for active participation.

Tenancy Agreements can be decided between landlords and tenants and the TSA's role should be to have examples of good practice and a framework of essential and desirable areas that the Agreement would cover.

The Governance issues for a Local Authority are challenging. We feel that Tenants should be able to influence decisions and be consulted before decisions are made, however service delivery for a Local Authority is such that it is not always sensible to have a two tier system – one for Tenants and one for Citizens.

The Local Authority sector works closely with the Audit Commission and further regulation in this field would not be welcomed.

This Council is keen to encourage value for money and believes the Government's principles of Best Value should be used to inform the National Framework.

The Council would be concerned to see additional burden introduced by the TSA in terms of monitoring requirements.

The Council is concerned that any grading system should be fair and equitable. Unless the financial circumstances of each landlord is similar we do not see how this could be achieved without creating a system which potentially is partial.

The best way to incentivise great performance and best practice is to reduce fees for your service.

The approach to ensure standards are met seems to be wide and provided these are used proportionately, the Council is content with these powers.

The registration process seems to be overly burdensome and should be streamlined.

.....continued.....

Finally, there should be a stronger link between the level of fee paid and the consultation which is currently being carried out. The Council is concerned that aspirational consultation without knowing the costs involved is not helpful and could be resented in the longer term.

Yours sincerely



R V LIVERMORE
EXECUTIVE MANAGER
HOUSING AND PROPERTY MAINTENANCE SERVICES

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the Year 2009/10***
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4.9.2009

RVL/EH
R.V. Livermore
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Dear Sir/Madam

I attach a copy of the feedback form completed following a Workshop attended by Councillors, Tenants and Staff.

Generally there was concern by all who attended that the resources available to Local Authorities would not see any marked improvement in the physical condition of properties or estates. There was concern that there would not be the same level of service offered despite a similar level of rent being paid. In short, Council Tenants were being treated as second class citizens.

The Council and its Tenants want to see a "level playing field" financially so that Social Tenants, whether they be RSL, Council or ALMO, can develop service delivery mechanisms that meet local needs and aspirations. The Council is committed to improving services for its Tenants and hope that the TSA can find a way to influence this important aspect.

Yours sincerely

R.V. LIVERMORE
EXECUTIVE MANAGER
HOUSING AND PROPERTY MAINTENANCE SERVICES

HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT STANDARDS IN SOCIAL HOUSING

TENANT AND MEMBER WORKSHOP

TUESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER 2009

SUMMARY OF TENANT AND MEMBER FEEDBACK

THEME ONE

1. THE SERVICE OFFERED TO TENANTS:

DECENT HOMES STANDARD

- Do not feel the standard is high enough but financial constraints prevent an improved standard
- Should have to meet more than 3 out of 5 standards
- Green audit should be included

TENANT CHOICE & CUSTOMER SERVICES

- Feel choice and service should be in all aspects of service delivery
- Want to involve tenants in choices but cannot always due to finance constraints
- Do not want to raise expectations that cannot be delivered

REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

- Difficult to compare RSLs/ALMOs to Councils due to different funding regimes and different standards of accommodation
- Feel should be set locally but could be based on national KPIs as a framework

NEIGHBOURHOOD & ESTATE MANAGEMENT AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Design of New Town Estates – Radburn make comparisons difficult if not impossible
- Difficult as standards not only set by Housing but other stakeholders
- Should it be set by tenants or residents or both
- Standards are very open

THEME TWO

2. TENANT EMPOWERMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

Empowerment

- Engaging tenants can be very difficult
- Working towards the standards but have some way to go – need to improve communication across the whole district.

NB – Time did not allow debate on the other service standard or themes.

TB/EH
4.9.09