

Environment Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Housing Providers



13 February 2014



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Big plans, bright future

Environment Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 1LD

Contents	Page
Select Committee membership + acknowledgements.....	3
Foreword.....	4
Original Brief.....	5
1.0 Executive Summary.....	6
2.0 Introduction.....	8
3.0 Background.....	8
4.0 Evidence.....	10
5.0 Conclusion.....	22
Appendix 1 - an overview of the stock transfer process.....	23
Appendix 2 - summaries of the formal LSVT consultation document.....	26
Appendix 3 - standards for registered providers.....	31
Glossary of Terms.....	35

Select Committee – Membership

Councillor Cooke (Chair)
Councillor D. Wilburn (Vice Chair)
Councillor Brown
Councillor Kirby
Councillor McCall
Councillor Rigg
Councillor Walmsley
Councillor Womphrey
Councillor Woodhead

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Select Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

Kay Glew, Head of Housing Services, Tristar Homes
Chris Joynes, Head of Operations, Fabric
Liz Kaden, Tenant Scrutiny Resident, Tristar
Dave Pickard, Director of Operations, Vela Group
Cath Purdy, Chief Executive, Vela Group
Tracey Rix-Mason, Head of Customer involvement, Vela Group
Jenny Shotton, Tenant Scrutiny Resident, Tristar
Chris Smith, Managing Director, Erimus Housing
Nicola Turner, Head of Property Services, Tristar Homes

Contact Officer: Graham Birtle, Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 01642 526187
E-mail: graham.birtle@stockton.gov.uk

Foreword

I am pleased to provide this report of the Environment Select Committee's review of housing providers in Stockton Borough.

The Committee was asked to determine the performance of Erimus Housing and Tristar Homes Limited following Stockton Council's stock transfer of its properties specifically in relation to 'promises' made to tenants in the pre-ballot offer documents. More recently the impact of the current economic climate on the 'promises' made to tenants in the offer documents may have been a concern that needed to be investigated.

The evidence based approach taken allowed the Committee to meet the Chief Executives and senior managers of the housing providers as well as undertake site visits to see for ourselves what changes, if any, were being delivered. The level of investment that Erimus and more recently Tristar have utilised is delivering what was unavailable to Stockton Council so validates the decision taken to transfer the housing stock.

It was reassuring to hear the positive messages from all parties whether this was from staff or residents. In particular I wish to thank the representatives of Tristar's resident filled scrutiny panel who gave evidence. They undertake a valuable role on behalf of the residents of Tristar Homes and have brought about further improvements in addition to what is already being provided. Even under our robust questioning they gave as good as they got which gave the select committee added confidence in the delivery of the 'promises'.

Thanks go to the Erimus, Tristar, and Vela senior managers who gave their time to meet us but also to all their staff who are working to deliver the improvements Stockton Borough residents are now benefitting from.

When the merger takes place of Vela Homes Tristar Homes, Housing Hartlepool, Tees Valley Housing and Erimus Housing to form 'Thirteen' we are quietly confident that the name chosen is not a prediction of fearful times ahead.

Cllr Cooke - Chair



Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

A cleaner, greener Stockton-on-Tees with high quality housing provision

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

To determine:

1. The performance of Registered Providers (Erimus Housing and Tristar Homes Limited) following the 2007 SSVT & 2010 LSVT – specifically in relation to ‘promises’ made to tenants in the Councils pre-ballot Offer Documents.
2. The impact of the current economic climate on the ‘promises’ made to tenants in the Councils SSVT and LSVT Offer Documents.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

Have the ‘promises’ detailed in each Offer Document been kept? Examples of ‘promises’ included:

- Repairing and improving homes
- Rent guarantees
- Housing management service improvements
- Enhanced tenant and resident involvement opportunities
- Broader regeneration (LSVT only)

As the downturn in the economic climate affected any promises? If so, what have these changes been?

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The main issues and overall aim of this review is to determine:
 - The performance of Registered Providers (Erimus Housing and Tristar Homes Limited) following the 2007 SSVT & 2010 LSVT – specifically in relation to ‘promises’ made to tenants in the Council’s pre-ballot Offer Documents. Examples of ‘promises’ included: Repairing and improving homes / Rent guarantees / Housing management service improvements / Enhanced tenant and resident involvement opportunities / Broader regeneration (LSVT only)
 - The impact of the current economic climate on the ‘promises’ made to tenants in the Councils SSVT and LSVT Offer Documents.
- 1.2 The Offer Document generally covers a ‘5 year’ period and as time goes by the Offer Document/‘promises’ are considered to have less weight due to contractual changes that are agreed with tenants or because of statutory changes. There have also been occasions when due to changing circumstances the Council has agreed to re-consider an Offer Document ‘promise’
- 1.3 The Committee noted that Welfare Reform could have a significant impact on the Registered Providers Business Plans as previous assumptions about rental income; void loss, bad debt provision etc. were subject to additional risk.
- 1.4 With over 200 promises to deliver over a 5 year period they are currently monitored through the Tristar Board as well as their Customer Panel. Timescales have been set for delivering against key projects and prioritised these following customer consultations after transfer. The Committee has heard that Tristar Homes exceeds its customers’ expectations and aims to establish innovative new services as well as improve existing ones. Scrutiny of Tristar performance indicators in its annual report provided written evidence.
- 1.5 The Committee met with residents on Tristar Homes Scrutiny Panel who were able to show improvements made to Tristar properties. However the low number of participating residents has suggested that a Vela Customer Scrutiny Panel be formulated covering both Tristar and Housing Hartlepool properties with tenant representatives from both housing organisations.
- 1.6 Site visits were organised to allow the Committee to see the investment for modernisation of Tristar properties. Amongst the properties visited were Wrensfield Court and Meadow Rise, Stockton and Kennedy Gardens, Billingham.
- 1.7 A Member’s survey was undertaken to gather views about housing stock transfers but due to a low response rate and very few negative comments this has provided very limited relevant information.
- 1.8 Members met Cath Purdy, Chief Executive of Vela to discuss the future plans of the Vela Group. The Committee learned of the advanced discussions for a merger between the Vela Group (incorporating Tristar Homes and Housing

Hartlepool) and the Fabrick Group (incorporating Tees Valley Housing and Erimus Housing). 'Thirteen' will be the name of the new group. The establishment of the Vela Group at the time of stock transfer brought better economies of scale to deliver tenant promises including investment work, service improvement, and new build. Further economies of scale are expected with the new merger. This will however reduce the total number of staff with potential redundancies of approximately 100 across the two current groups and their four operating landlords.

1.9 The Committee has been positively reassured that the promises are either being met or are being surpassed and therefore recommendations for Tristar Homes have not yet been identified. The Committee is intent to invite Cath Purdy to future meetings to monitor the promises in light of the merger to form Thirteen.

R1 The Committee recommend that further monitoring of the promises is undertaken by the Committee and senior officers of Tristar Homes provide regular updates of progress against the promises.

1.10 One area which has been highlighted throughout the scrutiny review and therefore is a recommendation relates to general communication between councillors and all social housing providers. This aims to improve Member awareness and cover automatic invitations to walkabouts in their wards, potentially the sharing of information relating to the type of complaints received by the RPs and the subsequent action they may have taken, and two-way communication between Council scrutiny and individual Registered Provider tenant scrutiny regarding reviews and findings.

R2 The Committee recommend that work is undertaken to improve the communication arrangements between councillors and all social housing providers.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Stock transfer both large scale (Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)) and small scale (Small Scale Voluntary Transfer (SSVT)) is a means by which housing stock could be transferred from local authority control to registered providers (RPs), also known as housing associations including former Registered Social Landlords (RSL). It is considered nationally as a well-established means of securing investment for the improvement of social housing. The benefits are seen to include:

- Registered providers able to borrow money from banks and building societies to buy and invest in housing to bring it up to a decent standard
- Allowing the creation of more meaningful tenant involvement in the management of their homes and contribute to wider community regeneration.
- Allowing the local authority freedom to focus on more strategic housing issues

2.2 Local authorities are required to work closely with tenants at all stages of the transfer process and a ballot of tenants is generally accepted as the best and most viable method of determining tenants' views.

3.0 Background

3.1 In March 2005 Stockton Council's Cabinet supported Small Scale Voluntary Transfer (SSVT) of six blocks of council owned sheltered housing providing 152 units of accommodation as the most viable means of securing the investment required to deliver quality older persons accommodation. Members endorsed the appointment of Erimus Housing as the preferred partner Registered Social Landlord (RSL).

3.2 Then in August 2007 a report was presented to the Cabinet that explained that whilst the establishment of Tristar Homes Limited (THL) as the council's Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO) had ensured investment of approximately £120 million in capital funding (to achieve the decent homes standard), it was necessary to consider how to build on the investment to ensure appropriate resources were available for on-going property and service improvements. Cabinet subsequently granted approval to undertake a stock option appraisal.

3.3 Criteria was developed, in consultation with tenants and Members and agreed by Cabinet, for the potential housing options available to the Council to be evaluated against. The ten measures were:

- Secure appropriate investment to fund property and external environmental investment works i.e. stock improvements, car-parking provision, property and estate security improvements.
- Regenerate and rejuvenate neighbourhoods.
- Meet the housing needs of the Borough (improve and increase the supply of affordable housing options for our tenants and residents).

- Meet the key national and local agendas (i.e. social inclusion, economic regeneration and the 'green' agenda).
 - Rents to provide value for money (for both new and existing tenants).
 - Tenant rights to be protected.
 - Provide a 'local' management and presence.
 - Ensure good communication structures with tenants.
 - Deliver opportunities for 'real' tenant involvement, participation and influence at all levels
 - Ensure continuous service and quality improvement.
- 3.4 To inform the option appraisal a stock condition survey i.e. the future repairs and maintenance liabilities of the housing stock over a 30-year period was undertaken. Whilst it acknowledged the substantial investment made in the housing stock to bring properties up to the decent homes standard, it also identified investment required to maintain this standard consistently across all housing stock, plus a programme of investment on items not included within the 'decent homes' standard i.e. double glazed windows for all properties, work to non-traditional properties, roofs, works to external areas and structural repairs to high rise blocks to improve the thermal performance of these properties. The report concluded that the stock investment needed over the 30-year period totalled £593,767,930.
- 3.5 A Joint Reference Group (JRG) consisting of 9 elected members of the Council representing all political parties and 9 tenants representing different parts of the borough was established with a remit to consider options for landlord choice before making a recommendation back to Cabinet for its consideration. The JRG agreed a short-list of landlord options with majority support for the establishment of Tristar as a new landlord within a new group structure formed with Housing Hartlepool.
- 3.6 A summary of the key reasons given for establishing a new housing group with Housing Hartlepool are detailed below:
- Housing Hartlepool was an established stock transfer organisation.
 - It had available resources within its business plan that it could use to secure new build properties in the Borough (Housing Hartlepool promised 100 new homes in the two years following transfer) thereby securing much needed new social housing. The properties would be branded as Tristar properties and Tristar would manage them. In addition Tristar would have the opportunity in the future to buy them from Housing Hartlepool, once it had the financial capacity within its own business plan (Tristar would benefit from the rise in capital values during this period).
 - It had a track record and experience of moving forward regeneration.
 - It had an impressive tenant involvement strategy including a tenant resource centre.
 - It had offered to underwrite 50 per cent of the Council's pre ballot risk should there be a negative tenant ballot.
 - It provided clear commitment that no jobs would be lost as a direct result of the Group proposals.
 - It had offered to provide interim loan finance to Tristar for one off set up costs at zero per cent interest (thereby saving the Council/Tristar borrowing costs).

- It would develop a joint funding prospectus to bring together Housing Hartlepool's existing business plan and funding portfolio with Tristar's portfolio - ensuring a critical mass and building on Housing Hartlepool's track record – thereby reducing funding risk and giving confidence to lenders and improving borrowing rates.

3.7 Reassurance was given that Tristar would be the asset owner of former council properties. Tristar would have its own business plan and Stockton rents would fund the proposed improvement programme in Stockton.

4.0 Evidence

4.1 Stockton Council has previously completed two stock transfers; a Small Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer (SSVT) to Erimus Housing in the summer of 2007 and a Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer (LSVT) to Tristar Homes in December 2010.

4.2 Before the Council took the decision to undertake both the SSVT and LSVT a comprehensive option appraisal was prepared to consider both stock and service investment needs and evaluate how the investment needs would best be addressed. Following the completion of each option appraisal Cabinet (and full Council) agreed that stock transfer was the only viable solution.

4.3 Once the decision to transfer had been taken, the process of 'landlord choice' began in consultation with tenants. With a 'preferred landlord' approved by Cabinet, the Council working in partnership with tenant representatives and the preferred 'new landlord' drafted an 'Offer Document'. The 'Offer Document' contained a series of tenant promises which detailed what improvements would be made and what services tenants would receive if they voted in favour of stock transfer. It also detailed what would happen if tenants decided to remain with the Council.

4.4 Each tenant received a copy of the 'Offer Document' before they were asked to vote on the transfer proposal. On both occasions tenants voted overwhelmingly in favour of stock transfer.

4.5 **Appendix 1** is an overview of the process undertaken by the Council leading up to the stock transfer and a summary of the key Offer Document promises made to tenants at that time. **Appendix 2** provides the summaries of each part of the formal consultation document "Your Home, Your Say" for the transfer of homes to Tristar Homes.

4.6 Tristar Homes agreed a number of promises with prospective customers in advance of the transfer on the 13 December 2010 which were contained in the offer document and formed part of the legally binding agreement with the Council and its customers.

4.7 The promises included commitments which can be brought together under three broad headings; service improvement, investment, and development. Some commitments were considered 'quick-wins' whilst others are to be delivered over a longer period.

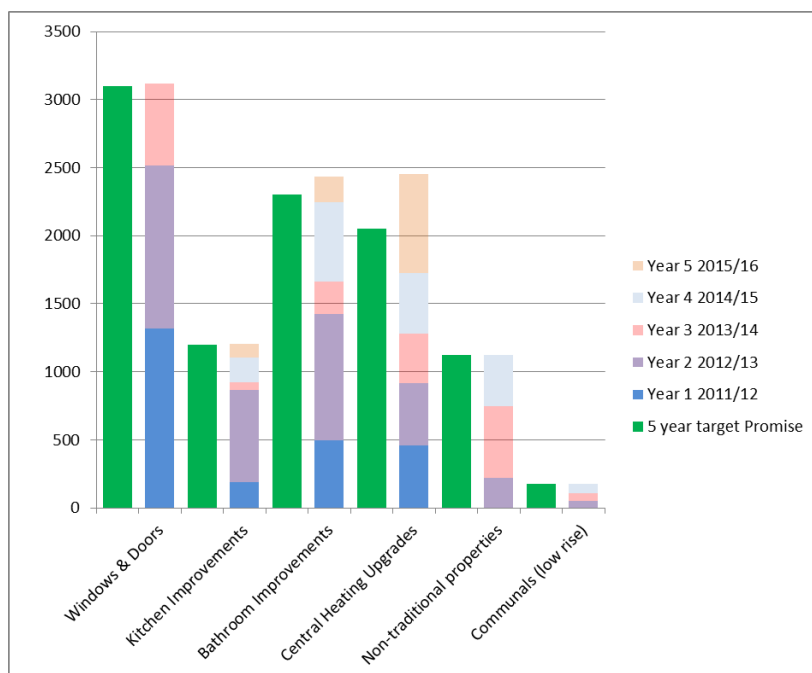
- 4.8 The Committee learned that the managers responsible for delivering specific projects have developed individual project plans and they have agreed specific tasks, milestones and targets so that performance can be accurately assessed and reported upon through the lifetime of the projects. An accurate assessment can be made in terms of 'in period progress' allowing managers to quickly identify any issues or barriers and anticipate whether or not a project will be delivered within the agreed timescale. Performance is then reported to the Tristar Executive Management Team and at one-to-one meetings with Stockton Council's Head of Housing.
- 4.9 Since the 2007 and 2010 stock transfers there have been significant changes in national housing policy and welfare reform leading to implications for registered providers (RPs) regarding their business plans and the promises made at the time of property transfers. The Offer Document generally covers a 5 year period and as time goes by the Offer Document/'promises' have less weight due to contractual changes that are agreed with tenants or because of statutory changes.
- 4.10 Stockton Council's Head of Housing highlighted implications of changing national housing policy and affordable housing funding and posed questions that landlords needed to ask themselves:
- Do we want to be a developing RP and if so which properties do we want to convert rents on?
 - Do we want to offer 'fixed term' tenancies as we have limited option on some new build sites when properties are HCA funded?
- 4.11 The local issues of welfare reform affecting registered providers were shown to be:
- 2,423 households affected by "under occupation" changes
 - Early indications suggested some RPs were seeing rent arrears increasing
 - Significant shift in bidding activity on Compass – the choice based lettings system (as households attempt to downsize)
 - Lack of 1 and 2 bed housing to meet emerging needs.
 - Already seeing a lack of demand for 3 bedroom properties (some standing empty)
- 4.12 Tristar's Annual Report 2012/13 stated that more than 3,000 Vela customers had been affected by the introduction of the Government's 'Bedroom Tax' since April 2013. This prompted a visit to every customer known to be affected to provide advice as well as financial assistance through Tristar's Money Advice Service to:
- Provide money and budgeting advice to help maximise customers' ability to pay the additional charge
 - Offer a referral to Tristar's Pathways Team for support in finding employment
 - Offer advice on transferring to a smaller property
- 4.13 The Committee heard that THL continue to monitor progress against the offer document commitments through its Board and Customer Involvement

framework. Any inability to adhere to a promise as a result of a Government change has been discussed with Stockton Council.

- 4.14 Due to changing circumstances the Council has agreed it appropriate to re-consider an Offer Document ‘promise’. For example, THL have discussed with Stockton Council and its Customer Panel in regarding the offer document promise in respect of the collection of rent over a 48/49 week period. With the introduction of Universal Credit and benefit payments being received calendar monthly in the future concerns had been raised regarding how customers will be able to pay their rent over a different payment cycle. Customers will receive shortfall payments each calendar month and therefore are more likely to go into arrears as their benefit payment will be paid over a 52 week period. Tristar Homes Customer Panel agreed to remove the non-payment weeks from April 2014 when it is likely that Universal Credit payments will be received.

Investment

- 4.15 Value of investment anticipated via the transfer for repairs and improvements (including ongoing repairs) in the first 5 years is £140m (of which £103m would be spent on bringing homes up to the ‘Tristar Standard’). Over 30 years it is expected to be in excess of £600m.
- 4.16 The timing of this review (2013/14) coincided with the mid-way point of the 5-year “promises” and the £103m investment plan for the major investment programmes. The chart below published in Tristar Homes document ‘Delivering against offer promises’ shows the level of progress achieved;



Tristar Homes – Delivering against offer promises – pg 11

- 4.17 The green bars show the anticipated number of component replacements at the time of transfer. The coloured bars alongside show progress in each of the three years since transfer, and therefore where Tristar Homes is against those promises. For example, it was anticipated that circa 3,000 window/door replacements would be required and it was promised to complete these within three years of transfer. By the end of the second year 2,500 had been completed, with the remaining works to be completed by the end of the third year. As such Tristar Homes were on target to achieve the promises made in advance of the full 5 year programme.
- 4.18 Regulatory standards exist that registered providers are expected to achieve and are classified as either 'economic' or 'consumer'.
- 4.19 Within the quality of accommodation registered providers shall:
- ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard
 - meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
 - in agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section six of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance
- 4.20 For repairs and maintenance registered providers shall:
- provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
 - meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes

For more details see **appendix 3**.

Site Visits

- 4.21 To better understand the approach being taken by Tristar Homes Ltd and Erimus Housing in meeting the promises made at LSVT/SSVT the Committee carried out a visit of properties to see what improvements had been carried out. They visited:
- Wrensfield Court, Wrensfield, Stockton
 - Radburn Estate – Marsh House Avenue / Bowhill Way, Billingham
 - Kennedy Gardens, Billingham
 - Eden House, Langdale Road, Billingham
- 4.22 The majority of the following photographs from the Tristar Annual Plan show before and after external perspectives of the properties visited.

Wrensfield Court



Before



After

4.23 Members saw the improved environment in shared spaces such as at Wrensfield House and the effort taken by Tristar but the lack of resident interest and involvement was a concern allowing the possibility of the communal areas not being maintained even though the design of the communal space was as a response to the residents' wishes. The Committee was somewhat reassured when told by Director of Operations, Vela Group that if no interest is shown then the design will be reconsidered.



Radburn Estate, before works



Radburn Estate, on completion

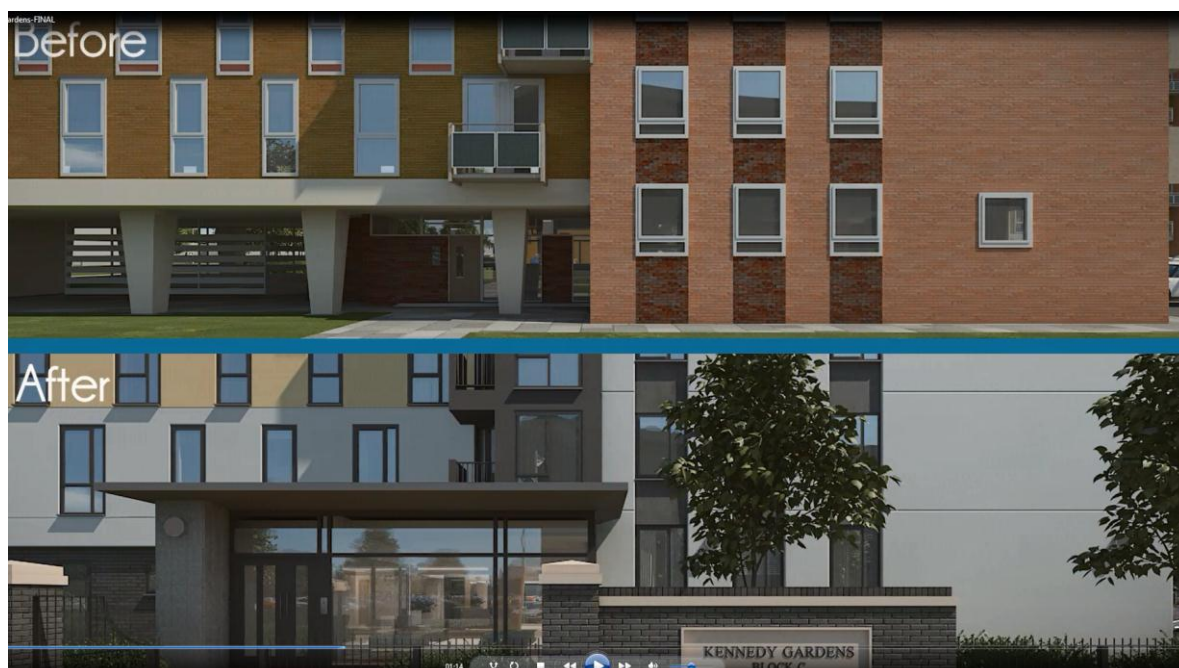


Kennedy Gardens, Billingham



Select Committee site visit – 9 September 2013

- 4.24 The Committee was particularly interested to see the Kennedy Gardens scheme, part of Tristar's investment programme involving major refurbishments to the 225 properties across its three apartment blocks, as well as creating 12 new one and two bedroom homes which will be made available for affordable rent.
- 4.25 The development is expected to be completed by September 2014 bringing the properties up to modern standards, making them more sustainable and energy efficient whilst improving customers' quality of life.



Artist impression

- 4.26 Externally, the apartment blocks will be given new high performance thermal windows and render finish, colour change lighting and solar panels. Internally, the individual properties will be fitted with new bathrooms and improved living space due to the new balcony extensions.



Artist impression

- 4.27 In addition, all communal areas will be upgraded including; energy efficient heating systems, mobility scooter charging points and free internet access kiosks.



Artist impression

- 4.28 The Committee was able to see the 'value added' by Tristar that the council was unlikely to have achieved had stock transfer not taken place which provided a visual confirmation of the council's decision to LSVT.

Eden House, Langdale Road, Billingham (Erimus Housing)

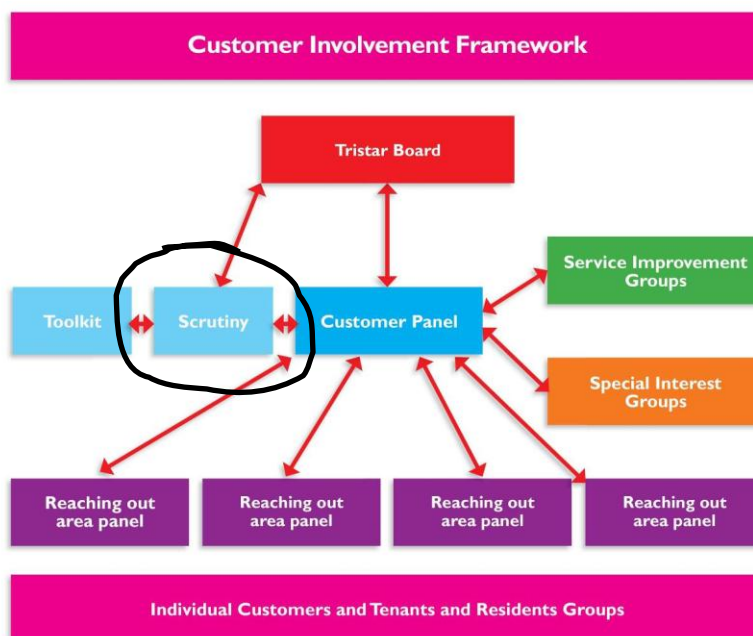


- 4.29 Members viewed the 'new' Eden House which provides self-contained two bedroom accommodation for elderly residents. The original Eden House was one of six sheltered schemes transferred at SSVT. The original building was in very poor condition providing only bedsit accommodation with shared bathroom and toilet facilities.
- 4.30 Following the site visits the Committee met in the ground floor communal room, Eden House for discussions with Dave Pickard, Director of Operations, Vela Group, Chris Smith, Managing Director, Erimus Housing, and Chris Joynes, Head of Operations, Fabrick to gather more information from what had been seen.
- 4.31 Although this review focussed on Tristar Homes as the 'promise period' was still active information about the transfer of properties to Erimus Housing was of interest to the Committee but it had no influence to affect change in the way it could, if necessary to Tristar.
- 4.32 Particular interest was taken in the STAR surveys which had shown satisfaction levels drop a significant amount since 2008. Neither Tristar Homes nor Erimus Housing could provide specific reasons why satisfaction levels had fallen, although both indicated that this appears to be a trend nationally. The Director of Operations, Vela Group considered that over time and with less involvement residents may not be as satisfied but places such as Kennedy Gardens, Billingham which was undergoing large scale refurbishment should provide a different result in the future.
- 4.33 Consideration was also given to the allocations process to which the Director of Operations, Vela Group confirmed has improved with the use of COMPASS (the choice based lettings system as prospective tenants 'bid' for available properties rather than their application being held on a waiting list.

Agency support is given to vulnerable people, a commitment in the offer document.

Tenant Scrutiny

4.34 Tenant scrutiny is one of a varied suite of activities that customers can be involved in to improve places and services; hold their landlord to account, and enhance their individual confidence and empowerment through a learning and development programme. The following diagram shows how Tristar customers can be involved:



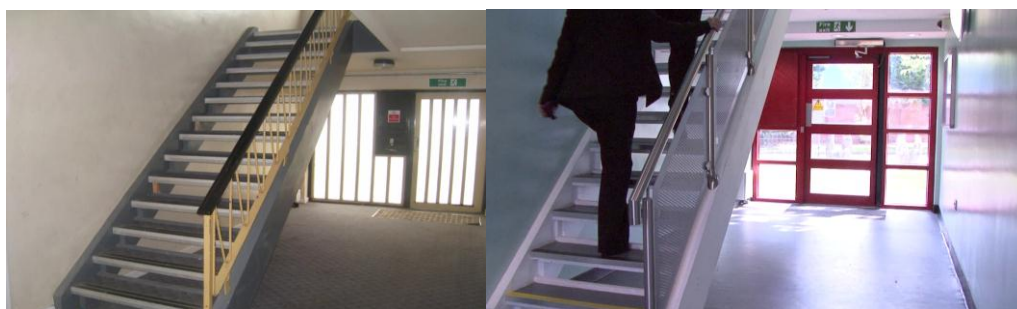
Tristar Homes – Delivering against offer promises – pg 6

- 4.35 The details of how residents should scrutinise their landlords was not prescribed prior to scrutiny panels being set up as they were to be designed and run by the tenants, who were considered best placed to take into account local factors.
- 4.36 Tenant scrutiny was therefore based on the specific principle that the opinions of tenants should be at the core of a social housing organisation’s framework for assessment and overview of its own performance.
- 4.37 For social housing providers the benefits were considered to offer improved services and higher levels of accountability. A well planned and resourced tenant scrutiny system could then result in improved tenant satisfaction, efficiency savings and staff confidence.
- 4.38 Other benefits to housing providers from tenant scrutiny were said to include:
- A (relatively) direct route to get ‘on the ground’ resident feedback to the Board.

- Receiving input from a wide range of tenants – not just those who complain frequently. Diverse tenant panels etc would help organisations meet statutory legislative duties towards minority groups of tenants.
 - Providers able to explain policies directly to tenants and view things from their perspective. This requires a thorough analysis of policies in the first place.
 - A proactive approach to economic regulation would result in social housing providers able to demonstrate better value for money whilst the involvement of tenants helps show how efficiently money is managed.
 - Even an ‘expensive’ tenant scrutiny system can still be cheaper than repeatedly hiring outside consultants to solve problems.
 - If residents feel valued and empowered then they will develop more respectful relationships with front line staff.
 - If a housing association is a charity then tenant scrutiny is a useful way to prove that you understand your beneficiaries’ needs and views. This will help ensure that the Board of Trustees are meeting their charitable duty to deliver public benefit.
- 4.39 The Committee benefited from meeting current and former tenant scrutiny panel members to investigate how successfully scrutiny had been put into practice. Members were particularly taken by the enthusiasm of the tenant panel members in what involvement in housing decisions scrutiny offered them.
- 4.40 From initially 8 tenants, of which three found paid employment the panel reduced to three but was up to 12 tenant members by merging with Hartlepool Housing with equal representation across both areas. The tenants gave particular praise to Tristar officers who had supported them in the reviews including presentation to the Tristar Homes Board which received the findings and recommendations.
- 4.41 When challenged to identify whether resident association or tenant scrutiny was their preferred method of interaction with Tristar the panel members each believed tenant scrutiny was better for holding management to account whereas resident associations only dealt with specific locations and was not borough wide unlike tenant scrutiny. It also provided improved linkages and two-way communication. As a result the panel members were able to highlight a number of success stories.
- 4.42 Aspects of the service promises have been reviewed by the Tristar Tenant Scrutiny Group in summer 2012. This piece of audit work commissioned by the Customer Panel aimed to validate promises which had been delivered and provided challenge based on customers experiences of services. Managers provided feedback to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel on a list of queries and the tenants went through each in turn, considering the manager’s comments and deciding whether they wanted further investigation of explanation or perhaps an area of future scrutiny.
- 4.43 The significant areas which received further challenge included:-
- Communication with tenants about planned improvement works citing the excessive amount of letters sent during the process.

- Publicising easy to understand service standards – more promotion was felt needed in an easy to access format.
- New tenants' rents would be charged at the same rate as existing tenants – An explanation was given that due to a shift in government policy since the stock transfer had taken place, with the introduction of affordable rents to help support the development programme and the building and acquisition of new homes in the Borough then this could no longer be achieved.

4.44 Their first scrutiny project looked at how Tristar manages communal areas. Visiting blocks of flats, interviewing staff and managers, carrying out job shadowing, and creating a customer survey provided the evidence for their findings and recommendations which was reported to the Tristar Board. The Board agreed a plan of improvement actions, including setting up a cleaning contract as residents on the ground floor were affected disproportionately. The following pictures show an example of the improvements made.

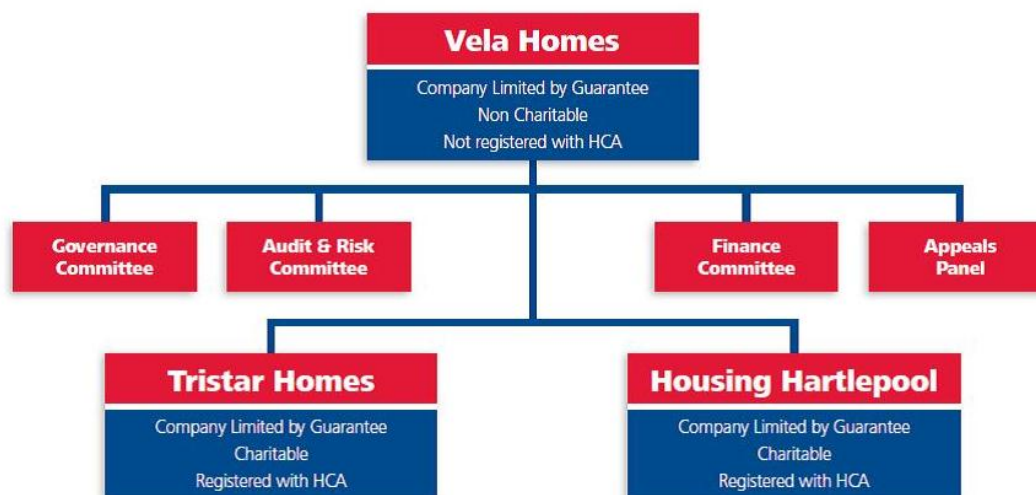


Before

After

Thirteen (the 'new' Housing Group)

- 4.45 Currently within the Vela Group (the parent group), there are two operating landlords Tristar Homes and Housing Hartlepool. The Landlord Companies are charitable companies, registered with the Charity Commission and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) as non-profit private registered providers of social housing.
- 4.46 The Parent sets the overall strategic direction for, and provides services to the Landlord Companies. The individual landlords retain ownership of the properties and are responsible for operational matters in relation to their stock and the delivery of their business plans. The management and running of the Group is delegated to an Executive Management Team, led by the Group Chief Executive.



- 4.47 During this review a proposed merger between Fabrick Housing Group (formed by bringing together Tees Valley Housing and Erimus Housing) and Vela Group has developed. The establishment of a new parent group would create one of the region's largest groups, with more than 32,000 homes.
- 4.48 The combined group would retain a federal structure with all five existing subsidiaries running as separate companies, retaining their present boards. The five subsidiaries are: Housing Hartlepool, Tristar Homes, Erimus Housing, Tees Valley Housing and supported housing specialist Norcare.
- 4.49 The two groups already work closely on a range of local initiatives. They are part of the north east's Spirit Partnership, which received a £30 million grant from the Homes and Communities Agency to build 1,597 properties by April 2015 as part of its affordable homes programme.
- 4.50 They have similar turnovers: in the 2011/12 financial year Fabrick produced revenue of £67.2 million, while Vela brought in £67.3 million. They generated surpluses of £7.4 million and £6.1 million respectively and have a combined staff of around 1,300.
- 4.51 It was felt that the merger would produce economies of scale and help the combined group counter the potential increased costs associated with welfare reform, such as rises in rent arrears.
- 4.52 Cath Purdy, Chief Executive of Vela Group gave evidence to the Committee in December explaining that the Tristar merger with Housing Hartlepool brought about economies of scale to deliver work. Further economies were expected with the new merger. It did mean that there would be a reduction in the total number of staff with a potential of approximately 100 redundancies across the 4 housing associations.
- 4.53 When asked whether the loss of staff would that affect the individual landlord services Members were reassured that the merger will affect back office and management and not the direct service provision tenants enjoy. Customer

panels had been used to gather views about the merger as well as special newsletters being published and delivered to all properties. Very few responses had been received so it was hoped that this could be taken that tenants were not overly concerned with the merger.

- 4.54 Welfare reform was a key focus for the housing associations with impact seen on rents and demand for properties. The Chief Executive, Vela Group was keen to stress that developing one bedroom properties would be a high risk strategy. Help was being given to offset rental shortfalls for tenants.
- 4.55 The new name of the merged company is 'Thirteen' which caused some query by committee members. It was pointed out it is memorable for being different and unusual in the context of a name of a housing organisation. It subsequently hasn't been forgotten by the Committee.
- 4.56 As the merger was being considered during this review and is expected to be concluded after (April 2014) the Committee was keen to see how the merger might impact on the promises made at the time of the stock transfer.
- R1 The Committee recommend that further monitoring of the promises is undertaken by the Committee and senior officers of Tristar Homes provide regular updates of progress against the promises.**

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Committee is positively reassured that the promises are either being met or are being surpassed and therefore recommendations pertaining to the offer promises are thought to be unnecessary.
- 5.2 However one area which has been highlighted throughout the scrutiny review relates to general communication between councillors and all social housing providers. Improvement could raise Member awareness and deal with automatic invitations to walkabouts in their respective wards. It also has the potential for the sharing of information regarding complaints (i.e. the type landlords have received and what form of action they may have subsequently taken), and two-way communication between Council scrutiny and individual Registered Provider tenant scrutiny regarding reviews and findings.
- R2 The Committee recommend that work is undertaken to improve the communication arrangements between councillors and all social housing providers.**

APPENDIX 1

	SSVT – Erimus Housing	LSVT – Tristar Homes Limited
Summary of properties affected	6 sheltered housing blocks – providing 146 units of accommodation. Of these; 2 schemes did not have self-contained WC or bathing facilities and 1 only provided very small bedsit accommodation.	10,392 properties, a mixture of houses, bungalows, low/medium rise and high rise flats
Option appraisal summary	Aim: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Secure adequate investment to meet the decent homes standard. – Ensure accommodation is sustainable in the long-term and matches need/aspiration. – Extend quality and choice. – Keep rents affordable. 	Aim: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Secure appropriate investment to fund property and external environmental investment works. – Regenerate and rejuvenate our neighbourhoods (deliver sustainable communities). – Meet the housing needs of the Borough (improve and increase the supply of affordable housing options for our tenants and residents). – Meet key national and local agendas (social inclusion, economic regeneration and the ‘green’ agenda).
Key issues at that time	Option appraisal completed in 2003: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Much of the accommodation was in a poor condition (40% failed the decent homes standard). – The cost of meeting decent homes standard and retaining until 2011 est. at £1.3m (but this did not fully address the need for remodelling the stock i.e. to provide self-contained accommodation). – The stock had a <u>negative valuation</u>; the Council was not in a position to make a capital contribution to fund either improvement or the cost of demolition/re-building works. – Demand for some blocks was ‘nil’ and the number of long-term voids was very high. 	Option appraisal completed 2008: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Whilst the establishment of Tristar (as an ALMO back in 2001) had levered in significant investment - £63m, only 87% of stock met the decent homes standard and this was not a consistent standard. – The ‘decent’ standard had been a ‘minimal’ standard rather than an aspirational programme of investment (i.e. did not include doors and window replacement). – There was an investment shortfall of £50m over 5 years and £81m shortfall over 30 years. – Some stock (notably Victoria and Swainby Road) was deemed as non-sustainable in the medium term and in need of a different investment option.
What alternatives did the Council	<u>Stock retention</u> – deemed unacceptable as the Council could not address the stocks investment needs.	<u>Stock retention (either as an ALMO or with the Council)</u> – not viable as would not address current and stock investment needs.

consider?	<p><u>Management by an ALMO</u> – unviable (as per above).</p> <p><u>PFI</u> – not viable due to the value of the project.</p> <p><u>SSVT</u> – deemed to be the best solution to lever in additional finance for improvement works and stock remodelling.</p>	<p><u>PFI</u> – not deemed to be a viable ‘whole’ stock solution.</p> <p><u>LSVT</u> – considered the only viable option, as sufficient resources would be generated from private funding.</p> <p><u>Regeneration Delivery Vehicle</u> – not viable as a whole stock solution.</p>
Cabinet decision to transfer	<p>SSVT approved as the only viable option in March 2005.</p> <p>Approval granted to progress with landlord selection.</p>	<p>LSVT approved as the only viable option in November 2008.</p> <p>Approval granted to progress with landlord selection.</p>
Landlord Selection	<p>A full landlord selection progress was undertaken; tenant representatives were integral to agreeing the landlord ‘brief’ and in choosing the new landlord.</p> <p>Following an assessment process, Erimus Housing was chosen as the ‘preferred’ new landlord (a decision endorsed by Cabinet in May 2006).</p>	<p>A full landlord selection progress was undertaken by a Joint Reference Group (which included equal numbers of council members and tenant representatives).</p> <p>Following this exercise there was majority support Tristar Homes as the ‘preferred’ new landlord and for Housing Hartlepool and Tristar Homes to form a new Group structure (decision endorsed by Cabinet in Sept. 2009).</p>
Developing the ‘Offer Document’	<p>A summary of the ‘promises’ agreed with tenants:</p> <p><u>Invest and improve 3 schemes</u> (Lauder House, High Grange House and Ewbank Gardens) including; property improvements, communal area improvements, improved security and environmental improvements.</p> <p><u>Demolition and rebuild of 3 blocks:</u> Witham House – rebuild with older persons apartments for sale and rent.</p> <p>Eden House – rebuild a new sheltered housing scheme for rent and shared ownership.</p> <p>Derwent House – rebuild a new sheltered housing scheme for rent and shared ownership.</p> <p><u>Maintaining homes</u> - repair timescales agreed.</p> <p><u>Rents</u> – to remain affordable.</p>	<p>A summary of the ‘promises’ agreed with tenants:</p> <p><u>Improving and repairing homes</u> - a new ‘Tristar Standard’ (a consistent standard) included double glazed windows and doors for properties that did not have them within 3 years of transfer. And for properties with old kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems replacements within 5 years of transfer. Improved repair service, offering early evening and Saturday appointments.</p> <p><u>High and medium rise properties</u> – Investment programme of £11m over 5 years included renewing lifts, upgrading security/door entry systems and communal area decoration.</p> <p><u>Tackling ASB and Crime</u> - providing support for tenants outside of office hours and additional resources to ensure there are employees in each team to provide advice and support on ASB.</p>



	<p><u>Provision of a quality housing service</u> – including named contacts.</p> <p><u>Specific older peoples services</u> – same level of warden support as with the Council, provision of adaptations.</p> <p><u>Tenant rights</u> – would be protected tenants to be issued with a new assured tenancy agreement.</p>	<p><u>Rent and Service Charges</u> – rents would stay affordable, no hidden service charges or hidden increases, home contents insurance would continue.</p> <p><u>Delivering better local services</u> – Introduction of a handy person to carry out minor jobs which are a tenant's responsibility (only cost would be for materials).</p> <p><u>Tenant/Customer involvement</u> – Development of a co-regulation approach with tenants scrutinising performance and service quality. Increased budgets for local Reaching Out Area Panels.</p> <p><u>Services for the elderly and vulnerable</u> - £1m per year commitment to adapt homes to meet individual needs. Delivery a priority repairs service to meet needs.</p> <p><u>Tenant rights</u> – key rights and entitlements would be protected. Those tenants who qualified retained a preserved Right to Buy.</p>
Tenant Ballot	Tenants voted in favour of the stock transfer proposal to Erimus Housing.	Tenants voted in favour of stock transfer to Tristar Homes Limited.
Role of tenants	<p>Vital throughout the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sheltered Housing Tenants Group; worked with the Council to select the new landlord, to develop the Offer Document and to oversee the transfer (28 tenants participated). - Informal consultation; consultation meetings carried out on a scheme by scheme basis 	<p>Vital throughout the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Futures Group; worked with the Council during the option appraisal, landlord selection, to develop the Offer Document and to oversee the successful completion of the transfer. - All tenants; via 'Your Home, Your Say' newsletters, consultation meetings, road shows etc.
Value of investment anticipated via the transfer	<p>Repairs and improvements (and ongoing repairs):</p> <p>First 5 years = £ 3.3m</p> <p>Over 30 years = £7.7m</p>	<p>Repairs and improvements (and ongoing repairs):</p> <p>First 5 years = £140m (of which £103m would be spent on bringing homes up to the 'Tristar Standard')</p> <p>Over 30 years = In excess of £600m</p>

APPENDIX 2

<p>The Council's housing transfer proposal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council wants to maintain and improve the standard of housing services, provide better homes and estates and protect tenants' key rights. ▪ The Council working in partnership with tenants looked at the options open to it regarding the future ownership and management of its 10,400 properties. ▪ The review concluded that as things stand the only way to raise the money needed to bring homes up to the standard tenants want is for the Council to transfer its housing to a new-style Tristar Homes as a new, not-for-profit, local, social housing organisation. ▪ The new-style Tristar Homes would have a budget of £140 million to spend over the first five years on improving and repairing your home, of this £103 million would be invested on bringing homes up to the Tristar Standard. The Council only expects to have around £66 million of which £29 million would be invested in homes. ▪ Currently the Council pays around £9 million of tenants rents every year to the Government to support social housing nationally. The new-style Tristar Homes would not have to send any money back to the Government. Instead every penny of tenants' rent could be spent by the new-style Tristar Homes for the benefit of all tenants.
<p>About the new-style Tristar Homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council is proposing that the new-style Tristar Homes is transformed into a new, local, 'not for profit' social housing organisation and would form a new housing group with Housing Hartlepool (an existing, neighbouring social housing organisation). ▪ The new-style Tristar Homes would be your new landlord and take on both the ownership and management of the Council's homes. ▪ The new-style Tristar Homes would be based in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees and be run by a Board of Management; 12 voluntary, unpaid Board Directors made up equally of tenants, Council representatives and independent people chosen for their skills and experience. ▪ The new-style Tristar Homes would register with the Tenant Services Authority (the new regulator for providers of social housing in England) and with the Charity Commission if transfer goes ahead. ▪ After transfer, the new-style Tristar Homes would continue to employ existing employees to provide

	<p>day to day services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The new-style Tristar Homes would have a legally binding agreement with the Council to ensure all the promises contained in this document are met.
Improving and repairing your home	<p>The new-style Tristar Homes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have a budget of around £103 million to invest in improving tenants homes over the first five years to bring all homes up to the Tristar Standard. The standard tenants have told us they want. ▪ Have a budget of around £13 million in the first five years to make environmental improvements such as fencing, gates, lighting and security improvements. ▪ Introduce an improved repairs service offering additional appointments including early evenings and Saturdays – making the service more accessible. ▪ Implement a compensation scheme when repair appointments are not met. ▪ Offer a decorating service for either new or transferring elderly and disabled tenants – to help them settle into their homes quickly.
High and medium rise flats	<p>The new-style Tristar Homes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invest £11 million in improvements to high and medium rise flats in the first five years. ▪ Continue to support the Concierge Service and provide opportunities for customers to review this service.
Tackling anti-social behaviour and crime	<p>The new-style Tristar Homes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be committed to preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour. ▪ Provide support for tenants outside of office hours by making available a 24 hour/7 day week reporting facility. ▪ Provide additional resources to ensure there are employees in each housing team to provide expert advice and support on anti-social behaviour. ▪ Work closely with the Council's multi-agency Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and the Police to resolve more serious cases and to identify local solutions to local problems. ▪ Have a Service Improvement Group to review the effectiveness of the existing policy and procedures and agree improvements.
The rent and other charges you would pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rents would stay affordable. ▪ All tenants' rent money would stay with the new-style Tristar Homes including almost £9 million currently paid to the Government. ▪ Your entitlement to claim Housing Benefit would not be affected by transfer.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There would be no hidden service charges and no hidden increases. Service charges would only recover the actual cost of providing the service. ▪ The home contents insurance scheme would continue. ▪ Tenants would continue to pay water and sewerage charges with their rent.
Delivering better local services	<p>The new-style Tristar Homes would plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce a Handyperson service to carry out minor jobs which are the tenant's responsibility. The only cost would be for materials. ▪ Provide an improved repairs service offering early evening and Saturday appointments. ▪ Work with tenants and tenants' groups to agree priorities at a local level to spend the £13 million environmental improvement budget. ▪ Expand the range of services to support tenants through money advice, help when first moving into a new home and offer employment and training advice. ▪ Work with and listen to tenants at a local level. ▪ Develop with tenants new ways of accessing services, for example, on line rent accounts and reporting of repairs.
Involving you in running the service	<p>The new-style Tristar Homes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure tenant and wider customer involvement is central to all services by expanding existing tenant and customer involvement structures. ▪ Encourage and support tenants, to get involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods at a level that suits them best – from taking part in tenant inspections, to applying to become a Board Director. ▪ Develop a co-regulation approach with tenants scrutinising both performance and service quality. ▪ Increase its dedicated budget for the local Reaching Out Area Panels – making sure local people can make decisions about the areas where they live. ▪ Work closely with special interest groups and communities such as disabled people and their carer, local people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds and young people.
Services for elderly and vulnerable people	<p>The new-style Tristar Homes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commit to spending in the region of £1 million per year to adapt homes to meet individual needs. ▪ Tailor services to meet the needs of elderly, disabled and vulnerable tenants including a priority repair service. ▪ Deliver a range of security measures, including

	<p>upgrading security lighting, better fencing and upgrading door entry systems where appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce a decorating scheme for both new and transferring older and disabled tenants (If tenants choose to use this service a charge would be made). ▪ Introduce a Handyperson service to carry out minor jobs which are the tenant's responsibility (a charge would be made for materials unless these were already provided by the tenant).
Green issues	<p>The new-style Tristar Homes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to invest in the energy efficiency of tenants' homes. ▪ Be committed to environmental and "green" policies.
Strengthening communities	<p>The new-style Tristar Homes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to be an active partner in the Tees Valley Choice Based Lettings scheme known as COMPASS. ▪ Promote local training and employment opportunities both within Tristar Homes and with its contractors. ▪ Work in partnership with residents, the Council and other agencies to make neighbourhoods places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. ▪ Work with the Council to complete the rehousing of tenants in Mandale and Swainby Road regeneration areas of the Borough. ▪ Be an active partner with the Council, tenants and leaseholders in the Victoria estate to develop an area regeneration proposal.
Your rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tenants' key rights and entitlements would be protected. ▪ Tenants would be offered a new assured tenancy agreement that has been developed in consultation with tenants. ▪ The terms of the new tenancy agreement (except for rent increases and changes to service charges) could only be changed with the tenants' written consent. ▪ Tenants would still be entitled to buy their homes, if they are entitled to buy now. The Right to Buy discount would transfer across and continue to grow up to the maximum allowed. ▪ Tenants would still have the right to pass on homes (succession) and the right to exchange. ▪ Tenants' entitlement to claim Housing Benefit would not be affected by transfer.
Leaseholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The terms of leaseholders' original leases would not change after transfer.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service charges would be payable to the new-style Tristar Homes instead of the Council. The new-style Tristar Homes would only recover the actual cost of the service provided. ▪ Leaseholders would be consulted on any major works which will be carried out in accordance with current legislation. ▪ Leaseholders would be able to pay for services provided by Tristar Homes such as improvement works, repairs and gas servicing at competitive rates.
<p>The proposed tenancy agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tenants' current key rights and entitlements would be protected in their new assured Tenancy Agreement with the new-style Tristar Homes. ▪ The conditions of the assured Tenancy Agreement can only be changed with tenant's written consent. ▪ The Tenancy Agreement details payment of rent, the new-style Tristar Homes' obligations, tenants' obligations and rights and grounds for possession.

APPENDIX 3

Standards for registered providers	Required outcomes
Governance and Financial Viability standard	<p>1. Governance Registered providers shall ensure effective governance arrangements that deliver their aims, objectives and intended outcomes for tenants and potential tenants in an effective, transparent and accountable manner. Governance arrangements shall ensure they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adhere to all relevant legislation ▪ comply with their governing documents and all regulatory requirements ▪ are accountable to tenants, the regulator and relevant stakeholders ▪ safeguard taxpayers' interests and the reputation of the sector ▪ have an effective risk management and internal controls assurance framework <p>2. Financial viability Registered providers shall manage their resources effectively to ensure their viability is maintained.</p>
Value for Money standard	Registered providers shall articulate and deliver a comprehensive and strategic approach to achieving value for money in meeting their organisation's objectives. Their boards must maintain a robust assessment of the performance of all their assets and resources (including for example financial, social and environmental returns). This will take into account the interests of and commitments to stakeholders, and be available to them in a way that is transparent and accessible. This means managing their resources economically, efficiently and effectively to provide quality services and homes, and planning for and delivering on-going improvements in value for money.
Rent standard	Registered providers shall charge rents in accordance with the objectives and framework set out in the Government's direction to the regulator of November 2011.

Consumer standards	Required outcomes
Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard	<p>1. Customer service, choice and complaints Registered providers shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards ▪ have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints

	<p>are resolved promptly, politely and fairly</p> <p>2. Involvement and empowerment Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the formulation of their landlord’s housing related policies and strategic priorities ▪ the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards ▪ the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved ▪ the management of their homes, where applicable ▪ the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and ▪ agreeing local offers for service delivery <p>3. Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants Registered providers shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ treat all tenants with fairness and respect ▪ demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs
Home standard	<p>1. Quality of accommodation Registered providers shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure that tenants’ homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government’s Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard ▪ meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard ▪ in agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section six of the Government’s Decent Homes Guidance <p>2. Repairs and maintenance Registered providers shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance

	<p>service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes
<p>Tenancy standard</p>	<p>1. Allocations and mutual exchange</p> <p>1.1 Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. They shall demonstrate how their lettings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ make the best use of available housing ▪ are compatible with the purpose of the housing ▪ contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities <p>There should be clear application, decision-making and appeals processes.</p> <p>1.2 Registered providers shall enable their tenants to gain access to opportunities to exchange their tenancy with that of another tenant, by way of internet-based mutual exchange services.</p> <p>2. Tenure</p> <p>2.1 Registered providers shall offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock.</p> <p>2.2 They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements or terms of occupation.</p>
<p>Neighbourhood and Community standard</p>	<p>1. Neighbourhood management</p> <p>Registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.</p> <p>2. Local area co-operation</p> <p>Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.</p>



3. Anti-social behaviour

Registered providers shall work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.

Glossary of Terms

ALMO	An Arms-Length Management Organisation owned by a local authority but operating under a management agreement between the local authority and the ALMO in order to manage and improve council housing stock.
HA	Housing Associations are independent, not-for-profit organisations that provide homes for people in housing need. They may be registered charities, and/or may be geared towards assisting particular social groups with accommodation. Rent may be subsidised to varying degrees. Housing associations are classified by the property industry as "registered social landlords".
HCA	The Homes and Communities Agency is the national housing and regeneration agency for England. It provides investment for new affordable housing and to improve existing social housing, as well as for regenerating land and is the regulator for social housing providers in England.
LSVT	Large Scale Voluntary Transfer involving the council transferring ownership of its homes (more than 500 units) with the agreement of its tenants to a new or existing Registered Provider (RP).
PFI	A Private Finance Initiative is a procurement method which uses private sector finance (using private sector debt and equity, underwritten by the public) and public resources in order to deliver public sector infrastructure and/or services according to a specification defined by the public sector.
RP	Registered Providers was the term for housing associations between 2010 to 2012 under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, irrespective of status (private, public, for-profit or not-for-profit). It continues to be used as an alternative name for a housing association
RSL	Registered Social Landlords is the general name for not-for-profit housing providers approved and regulated by Government through the Housing Corporation. The vast majority of Registered Social Landlords are also known as housing associations.
SSVT	Small Scale Voluntary Transfers involving the council transferring ownership of its homes (up to 500 units) usually to an existing RSL.