

Your Home, Your Say



January 2010

Information about the future of your home

Tenants will have their say



*says Cllr Steve Nelson,
Member for Housing &
Community Safety*

"The table with this newsletter sets out what the Council's current projections show could be achieved if properties were to transfer to the new-style Tristar Homes or if the properties were to stay with the Council"

"Over 200 transfers have taken place since 1988 and they have released more than £14 billion of investment for tenants' homes.

"Tenants in the Borough of Stockton will be able to have their say on transfer in a ballot planned for the spring of this year. I would urge all tenants to use their vote - it will help decide the future of affordable social housing in the Borough. Please do not waste your vote.

Make sure you have a vote

Every tenant has a vote – joint tenants living in the same home will each be able to vote.

To confirm who will be eligible to vote, please check your rent account details to ensure which names appear on it. You and those named on it will have the opportunity to vote.

If you think your name should be on your rent account details and it is not, please contact your local Tristar Homes Neighbourhood Office, as a matter of urgency.

Remember every vote counts in the transfer ballot. It is vital you have your say about the future of your homes.

An extra £80 million for investment in Homes and Services in the first five years

If transfer takes place, the new-style Tristar Homes would be able to spend around £140 million in the first five years, compared to the Council which expects to be able to spend £60 million in the same period. This means more money would be spent on improving homes and services.

Tenants have told the Council that, while the Decent Homes Standard has delivered some improvements to their homes, it was too basic. This did not tackle some of the improvements to their homes and estates that they felt were needed.

If transfer goes ahead, the new-style Tristar Homes would improve and then maintain the quality of your home and your neighbourhood. The programme of improvement works would concentrate on ensuring your homes are warm, energy efficient and safe, bringing them all up to a modern "Tristar" Standard and maintaining this standard.

The "Tristar" Standard is the name for the standard that the new-style Tristar Homes would provide if transfer goes ahead. It has been developed by tenants, for tenants. It has been shaped to ensure that essential maintenance works are continued, that there is a consistent property standard across the Borough, and to provide improvements and investment in areas that tenants have said are a priority. As a result the new-style Tristar Homes would plan to:

- Install double glazing (doors and windows) in every home if it is not already installed - within the first three years of transfer.
- Replace the oldest bathrooms, kitchens and heating systems first – within the first five years of transfer.
- Start a programme of environmental improvements, following consultation with tenants, spending £13 million within the first five years of transfer.

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Transfer Facts

Fact

Tenants would continue to have a say in the running of their homes if transfer goes ahead, with voluntary seats on the Board of Management.

Fact

Transfer is not a foregone conclusion. Only tenants can decide on whether it goes ahead in a secret ballot. Every tenant will receive a ballot paper.

Fact

You would not lose your right to buy your home with transfer

**Any Questions?
Freephone
0800 432 0891**

Better homes and services for elderly and disabled tenants

If transfer goes ahead, elderly tenants and disabled tenants would benefit from even more support.

That's because the new-style Tristar Homes would have more money than the Council to spend on services for older tenants.

The new-style Tristar Homes would:

- Tailor services to meet the needs of elderly, disabled and vulnerable tenants including a priority repair service.
- Deliver a range of security measures, including upgrading security lighting, better fencing and upgrading door entry systems where appropriate.
- Introduce a decorating scheme for both new and transferring older and disabled tenants (If tenants choose to use this service a small charge would be made).
- Introduce a Handyperson service for tenants carrying out minor jobs which are the tenant's responsibility. A charge would be made for materials unless these were already provided by the tenant.
- Commit to spending £1 million per year to adapt homes to meet individual needs

'A great opportunity for Stockton'

A chance to make a real difference

Steve Boyd, Managing Director of Tristar Homes, believes that the proposed housing transfer would make a huge difference to the quality of life for tenants in Stockton.

"Everyone at Tristar Homes is very proud of what we have achieved since we were set up as an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to manage the Council's homes – but the fact is there is not enough money to do everything we want to do. Transfer would allow us to do so much more than we can as an Arm's Length Management Organisation of the Council.

As a Housing Association, we would not be constrained by Government rules for Council housing funding and we would be able to borrow the money needed to bring homes up to our new "Tristar" Standard. Transfer is the only way we can guarantee to deliver the "Tristar" Standard and keep homes at that standard in the future.

"Not only could we modernise more homes which means new kitchens and bathrooms but we could also install double glazing where none has been fitted within the first three years of transfer"



Transfer's TOP 10 service improvements

If transfer goes ahead, it's not just homes that would benefit – services would get a major boost too.

The new-style Tristar Homes would deliver a new and improved housing service to tackle the issues that really matter to tenants.

From repairs appointments to a crackdown on anti-social behaviour, transfer would unlock the money to get things done.

Here's a countdown of 10 key service improvements that tenants could benefit from after transfer:

1. More measures to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour – including a 24hr/7day week response service.
2. Offering more repair appointments – including early evenings and Saturdays.
3. A priority repairs service for elderly and disabled tenants.
4. A guarantee of a minimum £5 million budget for the first 5 years to adapt tenant's homes to meet their needs.
5. Providing a new Handyperson to carry out minor jobs which are normally a tenant's responsibility (only the cost of materials would be charged).
6. Offering all tenants the opportunity of an annual home visit to provide practical advice and support.
7. Enhancing money advice services and helping tenants get back into training and employment.
8. Providing greater opportunities for tenants to get involved and money for the Reaching Out Area Panels (ROAPs) to spend on resolving local issues and problems.
9. Expanding the existing caretaking service.
10. Providing practical help and assistance to new tenants.

Watch out for your offer document

Soon you will receive your formal consultation document (sometimes known as an 'offer document') about the Council's proposal to transfer the ownership and management of its homes to a new-style Tristar Homes.

The offer document has been shaped by tenants from across the borough and contains details about the kind of improvements to homes and services you want to see and have told us are a priority to you in the future.

The document will explain how transfer works and what transfer would mean for:

- You and your home,
- Your rents,
- Your rights and entitlements, and
- Your say in decisions about your homes and services.

It is the contents of this document that form the 'offer' that the new-style Tristar Homes would deliver for its tenants, if transfer goes ahead. So please take time to read it and make sure the issues that are important to you are covered. At the back of the document you will find a post-paid reply card. Once you have read the document, please use the card to let the Council know your views.

Your views will be considered by the Council and may result in changes to the original proposal to reflect what tenants want for the future. Only after your views have been considered will the Council then decide whether to go ahead with a ballot.

It is very important that you read your formal consultation document. It contains all the information you need to make an informed choice



about transfer when the time comes to cast your vote. It will be one of the most important decisions you are asked to make about the future of your home.

Lights, camera, action!

TV's Wendy Gibson to present transfer DVD

TV presenter Wendy Gibson will be coming to a small screen near you.

Wendy will be presenting a special transfer DVD which will be sent to all tenants in Stockton borough.

Through a series of interviews, Wendy will help explain why the Council is proposing transfer and get answers to questions which tenants have been asking.

Look out for the DVD when it is delivered – it's a short film which will help you



understand the facts about transfer and what it means for you.

Meet the new-style Tristar Homes "shadow" board

What Type of Organisation would the New Style Tristar Homes be?

Tristar Homes would be transformed into an independent "not for profit" housing association registered with the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) - the new regulator for social housing in England. As a not-for-profit charitable organisation, the new-style Tristar Homes would be able to use all the money it collects from rents and service charges for providing and paying for housing and services to tenants in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

Who would run the organisation?

After transfer, Tristar Homes would be run by a Board of Management made up of 12 members: four tenants or leaseholders, four Council nominees and four independent people. Each Board member would bring a different set of skills to the organisation to ensure it has the ability to deliver the promises made in the formal consultation offer document. The Board Members would serve on a voluntary basis.

How have the "shadow" Board Members been selected?

Tenants

An advertisement appeared in a previous issue of this newsletter and later in the Evening Gazette, giving tenants and leaseholders of the Council the opportunity to nominate themselves to stand for the Board.

The tenants who applied completed an application form outlining their skills and the experience. The successful candidates were appointed by a panel of other tenants, representing the Housing Futures Customer Group, and representatives from the Council

and Tristar Homes. The Independent Tenants' Adviser, was present to ensure the selection process was carried out in an open, fair and democratic manner. Three Tenant Board members have been appointed to date – a fourth will be appointed shortly.

Council nominees

The Council appointed four Council nominees to the "shadow" Board.

Independent Board Members

The Tenant and Council Board Members chose the Independent members. Each Independent Board Member was chosen for their particular skills and professional experience. A broad range of business skills were sought to help ensure

The new-style Tristar Homes "shadow" Board Members



Tenants:

Paul Thomas, Vera Walker, Jackie Robinson

Council Nominees:

Councillor Robert Gibson OBE, Councillor Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Councillor Tina Large, Councillor Bill Woodhead

Independents:

John McDougall, Geoff Lee, Mohamed Shauq, Stan Irwin

Transfer Letters with the Housing Futures Team

Transfer Letters is your opportunity to put the Council on the spot. Send your questions into the Housing Futures Team and they will answer them in the next issue. Here are some questions currently being asked by tenants in the Borough.

Q: Would I be given a choice of the type of kitchen and bathroom I got after transfer?

A: Yes, you would be able to choose from a range of materials, such as different worktops, units, tiles and flooring. Improvements to your home would be made using quality materials with a high standard of workmanship. The improvements would be designed in close consultation with you, to make sure they met your requirements.

Q: Do I have to have improvements carried out to my home?

A: You might not wish to have improvements carried out or the timing might not suit you. Wherever possible, your wishes would be taken into account, as long as the work was not essential for health, safety or welfare reasons.

Q: Who would do the improvement works?

A: The new-style Tristar Homes would continue to have its own workforce. However, the improvement programme, as well as the catch-up repairs and planned maintenance, would be done by a combination of carefully selected contractors and the organisation's own workforce.

Q: If we vote in favour of transfer, are we voting for the end of social housing in the Borough?

A: No. The new-style Tristar Homes would simply start from where the Council would end. It would be a Housing Association, which means affordable social housing would still be available to tenants across the Borough. If transfer goes ahead it would ensure that good quality affordable housing is available for the future generations of tenants.

Q: How can the new style Tristar Homes as a new association afford to do what the Council cannot?

A: The Council is subject to Government financial rules, which means it cannot borrow the money needed to bring its homes up to the standard that tenants have said they want in recent surveys. The new-style Tristar Homes, as a not-for-profit housing association, would not be restricted by these rules. This means it could afford to borrow the money needed to bring the homes up to the new "Tristar" Standard, the standard tenants want to see, and keep them up to that standard in the years to come.

Q: Is transfer a foregone conclusion, would tenants get a say on transfer?

A: The Council believes that the transfer would be the most realistic option to secure the necessary funds to invest in your homes now and in the future and to ensure the continued improvement of services demanded by tenants. But that does not mean it is a foregone conclusion - tenants will decide in a ballot planned for later this year.

Getting tough on anti-social behaviour

If your estate suffers from anti-social behaviour problems, it can really get you down.

That's why the new-style Tristar Homes would devote more time and resources to both preventing and tackling the issue.

If transfer goes ahead, the new organisation would respond quickly to reports of anti-social behaviour, and would take firm action against tenants who abuse their home or neighbourhood. Where necessary, culprits would be evicted.

The new-style Tristar Homes would also work closely with tenants, the Council and the police, to create a 'joined up' approach to solving problems.

Trouble causers could face eviction, and all new tenants, as is the case now, would be placed on a 12 month "starter" tenancy – this would help the new-style Tristar Homes deal with tenants carrying out acts of anti-social behaviour or harassment.

Other measures would include:

- A commitment to aim to respond to all incidents within 24 hours.
- Additional resources to ensure there are employees in each housing team who can provide expert advice and support on anti-social behaviour.
- Giving clear information and practical advice on what tenants can do to help them deal with anti-social behaviour.
- Providing access to a wide range of options to support to tenants who suffer anti-social behaviour.

Want to know more or want to get involved?

For more information on the Housing Futures and how to get more involved with please contact either:

Stockton Borough Council – Housing Futures Team:

Address : 16 Church Rd, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1TX

Freephone : 0800 432 0891

E-Mail: – housing.futures@stockton.gov.uk

Tristar Homes Limited - Customer Involvement Team:

Phone: 0844 736 0007

E-Mail : resident.involvement@tristarhomes.co.uk

Engage Associates - Your Independent Tenants Adviser:

Phone: 01845 537145

E-Mail: info@engage3.org

Your Home Your Say information webpages:

<http://www.stockton.gov.uk/yourhomeyoursay>

OR follow the links on the homepage of the Stockton Borough Council website

If you would like this information in any other language or format for example large print or audio please contact 'Housing Futures Team' on 0800 432 0891.

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطباعة الكبيرة أو بالشريط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال 'بدايفرستي تيم' 0800 4320891 على هاتف رقم [Housing Futures Team]

ARABIC

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز میں چاہتے ہیں تو 'ہاؤسنگ فیچرز ٹیم' (Housing Futures Team) کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 0800 4320891

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4320891 接洽 '多元化隊' (Housing Futures Team)

MANDARIN

اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان یا شکل دیگری مثلا چاپ بزرگ یا بصورت صدا میخواهید لطفا با تیم دایورسیتی (Housing Futures Team) با شما را 0800 4320891 به تماس شوید

FARSI

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ

'Housing Futures Team' ਨੂੰ 0800 4320891 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ

PUNJABI

نه گهر جهزت لئ به نه م زانباريه به دهستت بکه وئت به زمانه کانی تر یان به شنه به کی تر یو نمونه چاپی گه وره/یان به تیبی نۆمارکراو تکایه به یوهندی بکه به 'تیمی دایفیرستی' (Housing Futures Team) له سهر ژماره کی تله فون 0800 4320891

KURDISH

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FRENCH

