

Social Housing Green Paper

Background and Purpose

The Social Housing Green Paper was published in August 2018 and the purpose of this note seeks to set out how the 3 models under consideration (ALMO, in-house, RP) would deal with each strand. It should be read in conjunction with the paper on Tenant Engagement (elsewhere on the agenda) since the green paper is largely focused on strengthening the Tenant's Voice. The Green Paper has **five core themes** and each of these is then considered through the lens of the tenants in Appendix 1:

1. Ensuring Homes are Safe and Decent

Ensuring resident safety - The Green Paper leads with proposals on safety, understandably, as the paper was formed in the wake of the tragedy at Grenfell Tower. The Paper supports the principles behind the Hackitt review of building regulations and commits to bringing forward legislation on building safety.

Reviewing the Decent Homes Standard – The Green Paper notes the Standard has not been revised since 2006 and should now be reviewed and updated. Recent tightening of safety has been applied to the private rented sector and additional measures are now needed for social homes.

In an ALMO, the council and the ALMO would work closely to establish and ensure the ALMO's Fire Safety Plan is consistent with the Council's Fire Safety Policy and in its role as asset owner would set/agree the capital plan in line with its own ambitions and those of tenants whereas in the housing association model this would be the responsibility of the Board offering a lesser degree of assurance and influence on investment in the housing stock than either the council or ALMO models.

2. Effective Resolution of Complaints

Removing Barriers to Redress - Government has been moving towards better redress for tenants for some time now and the proposals include strengthening mediation including removal of the 'barrier' of a designated person in order to access the Housing Ombudsman which would require primary legislation. Other issues raised in the Paper include how residents are aware of how to complain, what are their rights and how to deal with retaliatory action. To speed up the complaints process, a suggestion is for the Regulator to set out more specific timescales in a Code of Practice.

We recognise there is a need for greater accountability and thought about how tenants' voices can be heard at national and local level.

Tenant engagement is critically important to the council's housing service and we are introducing a wide variation of methods in the way that residents are listened to.

3. Empowering Residents and Strengthening the Regulator

Performance Indicators - The Green Paper includes proposals on how tenants judge the performance of a landlord and proposes that performance data is published in a consistent format with all landlords assessed against a number of performance indicators.

Key performance indicators will be on repair, safety, complaints handling, engagement with residents and neighbourhood management. It is also proposed that residents are able to compare the performance of different landlords' complaints handling so that there is a consistent approach to reporting to the Regulator.

It is also proposed that the Regulator publishes landlord performance in the form of league tables. Views are invited including on whether the performance indicators should be reflected in 'consumer' ratings, and governance and viability ratings.

The Paper suggests the role of financial incentives and penalties to promote best practice and deter worst performance. This would include whether the KPIs should help inform the extent to which landlords receive funding from the Affordable Homes Programme by linking KPIs to the bidding process.

Resident Engagement - KPIs will also be used for measuring resident engagement. Through a regulatory review it will be considered whether there needs to be greater consistency and transparency for residents and whether landlords are setting the right expectations on how to engage with residents.

Resident Voice - The Paper asks "is there a need for a stronger representation for residents at a national level?" Landlords are expected to work closely with residents in developing new opportunities to have their voice heard and how this can best be achieved.

A Stronger Regulator – The Green Paper states that the Regulator's ability to enforce consumer standards is limited by the 'serious detriment' test. A separate review will look at whether the consumer regulation objectives and standards need to be changed and related to the new KPIs. Government will also be considering how to have sufficient oversight to hold the Regulator to account to Parliament.

The Paper suggests that regardless of whether someone is a resident of a housing association or a council, the same standards should apply and asks if the Regulator should monitor the performance of local authority landlords. It is also suggested that its remit is extended to other organisations such as TMO's and ALMOs.

4. Tackling Stigma and Celebrating Thriving Communities

Stigma was the most consistent theme raised by residents in recent consultations and the Green Paper's main theme was promoted as tackling this perception of social housing and the people who live in it. The Green Paper aims to "rebalance" the relationship between landlord and tenant and to increase supply. Proposals aim to "celebrate the role of residents" by recognising the best neighbourhoods.

Customer Service – The Paper aims to embed a "customer service culture" and seeks evidence on the impact that landlords are playing beyond their key responsibilities. One of the new KPIs for landlords to be held to account will be on tackling Anti-Social Behaviour.

Good Design – The Green Paper proposed good design "regardless of tenure" and references the revised National Planning Policy Framework setting out policy for quality building. Guidance will be published later this year on applying this to social housing and comments are invited on how planning guidance can support good design in the social sector.

5. Expanding Supply and Supporting Home Ownership

The Green Paper includes a proposal on how to fund replacement homes sold under Right to Buy. The government has launched a pilot to test the extension of the policy for housing association tenants, but otherwise it has been absent from the debate up to now. No discussion on the supply of quality, affordable, social housing is complete without consideration of the implications of Right-to-Buy so it is useful that the Green Paper seeks to do this.

The Green Paper includes proposals for:

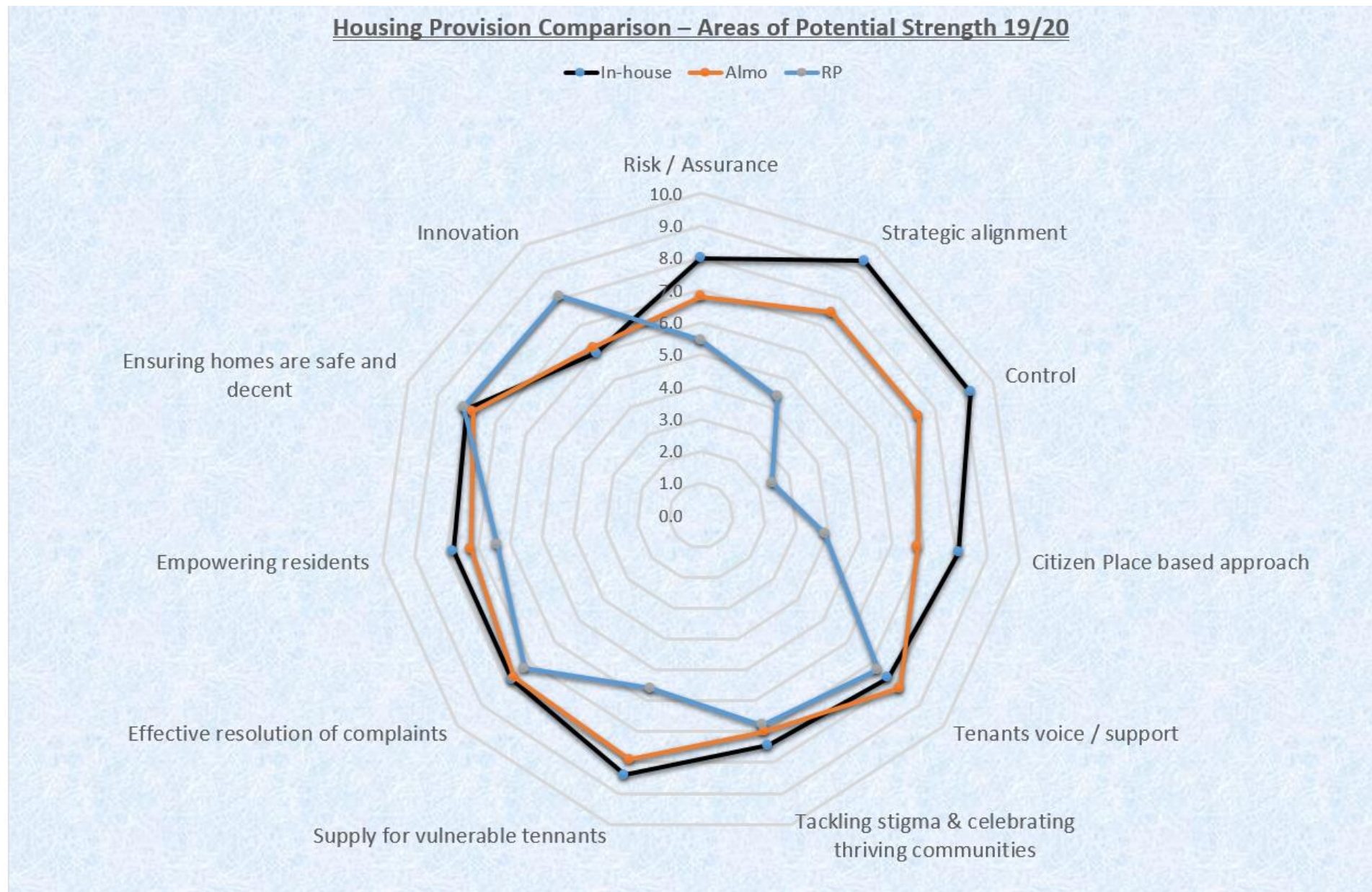
- Raising the housing borrowing cap which has subsequently been removed
- Reforming the Right-to-Buy receipts
- Giving LAs the confidence to invest in home building – by abolishing proposals to bring higher value assets into effect – this legislation has now been repealed
- The role of housing companies
- Community led housing – better understanding of how public and private investment can improve existing housing
- Affordable homes / longer term certainty – funding certainty over longer periods and views are sought on the impact of this on affordable housing
- Investment for social housing Social housing for those who need it most – evidence will be collected on the Allocations Frameworks across the country.

The Paper recognises the value of fixed term tenancies and victims of domestic abuse would retain lifetime security.

Voluntary Right to Buy – a pilot for HA residents has been underway in the Midlands for the past 12 months and a new feature will be tested – a ‘portable discount’ allowing a resident to move their discount to a different property.

Affordable home ownership – proposals will be considered to lower the minimum 10% staircase requirement for shared ownership.

Appendix 1



Housing Provision Comparison 19/20

