

# Your Homes Your Future



An independent newsletter from The Harborough Tenants Steering Group Issue 2 November 2004

## COUNCIL OFFERS TRANSFER

After looking at their options, our Council wants to talk to tenants and leaseholders about a transfer of all Council homes to a Registered Social Landlord (like a Housing Association or Trust).

**A Transfer cannot happen without a secret ballot of all tenants.**

**Tenants will decide on Transfer.**

### SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

It has become harder and harder for local Councils to fund housing services. And harder to keep homes maintained and modernised. Having brought in specialists to look at the problem in Harborough, our Council feels that only a **Stock Transfer** to a

Housing Association can deliver the money to improve Harborough's Council housing, keep services up to scratch and provide new affordable homes.



### SO WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IN HARBOROUGH?

The Council needs Government permission for a transfer. More importantly they have to consult with tenants and leaseholders.

**They can't transfer homes without permission and a secret ballot of tenants.**

So over the next 12 months, our Council will be putting its case for transfer. There will be local meetings, posters, events, newsletters and yet more meetings. Active tenants and our Independent Tenants' Advisors will also be busy making sure you have all the information.

**Tell Us What You Think**

Use the tear off slip on this newsletter or phone  
Freephone 0800 0855 492

Watch out for our  
**Tenants' Information Roadshows in 2005**

## WELCOME

The Harborough Tenants Steering Group are keeping a close eye on the transfer proposals.

We promise:

- To give you the facts
- To look after the interests of all tenants and leaseholders
- To be independent of the Council

If you want to find out more phone The Harborough Tenants' Resource Centre:  
**01858 464 519**

## ARE YOU A LEASEHOLDER?

This affects you too. You have a right to be consulted too. Contact us if you have any worries  
Freephone 0800 0855 492

# DWA

**A not-for-profit housing  
consultancy company**

**Genuinely Independent  
Advice. This is not a  
Council newsletter. It  
has been designed and  
produced by DWA, your  
Independent Tenants'  
Advisors.**

USE OUR REPLY SLIP TO GET IN TOUCH OR FREEPHONE 0800 0855 492.

This newsletter is available in other formats and languages.

Visit our website [www.dwa-housingconsultants.co.uk](http://www.dwa-housingconsultants.co.uk) and click on Tenants' Zone  
Remember It Can't Happen Without Your Vote. There Must Be A Secret Ballot Of Tenants



# So What's The

It has become harder and harder for local Councils to fund housing services. The Government has introduced a new standard. This is called the **Decent Homes Standard**. It covers 4 areas:

- Homes Must Be Fit To Live In
  - Homes Must Be In A Reasonable State Of Repair
  - Homes Must Be Warm
  - Homes Must Be Secure
- Harborough Council can meet this standard **but** tenants tell the council they want a higher standard of service. This means extra money to fund these extra improvements. An even bigger problem for Harborough Council is that the books are not balanced. This means that by 2007 they will have to make some cuts in the housing service so that the books balance. We have asked for specialists to look at the problems our Council feels that only a **Stock Transfer** to a Housing Association could provide new affordable homes in the District.

*Remember It Can't Happen Without Your Vote*

## REMEMBER

A transfer cannot happen without a secret ballot of all tenants:

- If the majority who vote, vote NO then no transfer can take place
- If the majority who vote, vote YES then a transfer may take place.

## HELP IS AT HAND

Now that our Council has decided to look at a transfer of all Council homes, we all have the right to Independent expert advice to protect our rights.

The **Harborough Tenants Steering Group** has re-appointed a team of housing experts from a company called **DWA** to **work for us** (not the Council) over the next year.

They are there to help you (see back page for details) Call them free on **0800 0855 492**

## So What Are The Pros

### YOUR QUESTIONS

### If We Vote YES with the Council

YOUR QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
Will I still have the same rights?	You will still be a Council Tenant. Your rights will stay the same.
Will my rent increase?	Rents can only rise in line with the national formula
Will I still get Housing Benefit?	Yes. Your entitlement to Benefit will stay the same.
Will I get the same service?	The Council will need to reduce services. Services will change. This may mean fewer repairs or fewer staff.
Who will make the decision to transfer?	Tenants. There must be a secret ballot by a majority of those who vote, vote YES for a transfer to take place.
Will I have to move home?	No, you are safe in your home and your rights are protected.
I am a leaseholder – will my lease be affected?	There should be no change
Will new tenants have fewer rights?	Tenants who move in after a NO vote will have the same rights as current tenants.
What happens if there is a NO vote to transfer?	You stay with the Council
So what are the Advantages of the two alternatives?	Tenants stay with the Council. Tenants with the same rights as current tenants. The service continues to be provided by elected councillors.
And the Disadvantages?	Budget reductions may mean a lower level of service than is provided at present. Permission to borrow money may be restricted by the Government. No money to invest in new housing. Limited tenant representation.

USE OUR REPLY SLIP TO GET IN TOUCH

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# the Problem?



has set a new national standard that all Councils and Housing Associations must meet by 2010.

provide A Reasonable Degree Of Warmth ■ Homes Must Have Reasonably Modern Facilities  
of repair and improvements. The **Decent Homes Standard** is only a basic standard. Harborough Council  
that the Council is slowly spending more money on housing than it gets from rents and Government grants.  
e. And another worry is that our Council has no money to build any new homes for rent. Having brought  
n can deliver the money to improve Harborough's Council housing, keep services up to scratch and provide

## e. There Must Be A Secret Ballot Of All Tenants

## Pros and Cons of Transfer?

To Stay Council R	If We Vote To Change Our Landlord ANSWER
at and your rights will	The major rights you had as a Council Tenant will be <b>protected</b> (for example you will keep your Right To Buy and your Discount). You become an Assured Tenant of the new landlord. You keep your Security Of Tenure.
with the Government's	<b>Rents can only rise in line with the Government's national formula</b>
ts are unaffected	Yes. Your entitlement to Benefits are unaffected
e spending in 2007. nean cuts in day-to-day	An agreement (called an Offer Document) will set out standards at least as good as at present. A new landlord will have to keep any promises they make to us.
t ballot of all tenants. If the te <b>NO</b> , no transfer can take	Tenants. There must be a secret ballot of all tenants If the majority of those who vote, vote <b>YES</b> a transfer can take place.
and all your rights are	No, you are safe in your home and all your major rights are protected. There should be no change.
D vote would be Secure s existing tenants.	Tenants who move in after a transfer would be Assured Tenants, with slightly different rights to existing tenants. You stay with the Council
Tenants keep their Secure s to be run by our	The money a transfer brings in will mean all homes can be repaired and improved. Services will be maintained and improved. New homes could be built . Tenants will be represented on the management board.
lower level of ent. ust come from build new homes.	The Council is no longer the landlord. New tenants (those who move in after a transfer) have different legal rights. Although the tenancy agreement can be written to give new tenants similar rights to existing tenants.

## DO YOU KNOW YOUR RIGHTS?

*Find out more  
Have your say*

If you have any worries or questions about the Council's plan to transfer its housing to a Housing Association:

- Phone our Independent Advisors FREE on **0800 0855 492**
- Speak to your local Councillor
- Speak to the Housing Department on **01858 821 072**
- Contact us, the Tenants Steering Group on : **01858 464 519**
- If you have a computer email the Council on **d.floody@harborough.gov.uk**
- Or **DWA** on **info@dwa-housingconsultants.co.uk**

**We want to hear  
your views**

CALL OR FREEPHONE 0800 0855 492.

and click on Tenants' Zone Remember It Can't Happen Without Your Vote. There Must Be A Secret Ballot Of Tenants

## OUR INDEPENDENT ADVISORS

When landlords are thinking about making any major changes to the housing service tenants and leaseholders are entitled to their own independent housing experts to double check what the Council is doing or saying. The Government expects Councils to pay for this service so that expert professional advice is completely free for tenants and leaseholders at the point of delivery.

A not-for-profit company called **DWA** has been appointed by the Tenants Steering Group to provide this advice in Harborough and District.

You can contact them FREE on 0800 0855 492  
24 hour answerphone



Above Deborah Walthorne, and Wendy Blackburn and, right, Christoph Sinn, your independent advisors.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE TENANTS' STEERING GROUP

Over the past 18 months the Tenants Steering Group based at the Tenants' Resource Centre in Harborough have been involved with as many people as possible to widen our knowledge concerning Stock Options and Stock Transfer.

We feel that at this stage transfer is a good way forward to protect our homes and services. This decision was not made lightly. And now we want to hear from you.

Over the coming months many more meetings will be held throughout the District and all tenants and leaseholders will receive lots more information through the post - from us, from **DWA**, our Independent Tenants' Advisor, and from the Council.

**Please make sure you read everything you can**  
**We would also urge you to attend as many meetings as you can.**



*To all those who have been to recent meetings... Thank you for your support and for your views. We hope we can meet many more of you at some future meetings.*

### WATCH OUT

For more newsletters, leaflets and local meetings organised by **DWA** and the Harborough Tenants' Steering Group

Yes, I want more information on what is happening

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Your phone no. if you have one \_\_\_\_\_

Your address \_\_\_\_\_

Your question \_\_\_\_\_

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You may receive all sorts of unofficial information over the next few months – if you are not sure about anything please check with your Independent Advisors to make sure you have the full facts. If you are unable to visit any of our meetings or advice sessions do not worry. You can have your say by contacting us by FREEPHONE 0800 0855 492, By FREEPOST SWC 5119 Telford TF8 7ZA or by visiting our website [www.dwa-housingconsultants.co.uk](http://www.dwa-housingconsultants.co.uk). Or email us on [info@dwa-housingconsultants.co.uk](mailto:info@dwa-housingconsultants.co.uk)

The free phone is open during normal office hours. In the evening or at weekends you can leave a message on an answer phone. We will ring you back if you leave your name and full telephone number – Don't forget to give us your area code.