

Housing chief executives - WhatsApp summary

December 2022 – January 2023

A note to readers

These notes summarise recent discussions on Campbell Tickell's WhatsApp group for Chief Executives of housing associations and ALMOs across all four UK jurisdictions and the Republic of Ireland. A full summary of discussions from the inception of the group is available on request.

This is a closed group, open only to CEOs in housing associations and ALMOs. It currently has around 250 members.

While discussions are confidential and unattributable, members of the group are keen for the content themes and issues to be shared widely to assist with broader understanding.

Please note:

The following digest highlights matters that have been discussed in the group. None of the content should be treated as representing the collective views of the group as such, or be attributed to any of its members. The group is an information-sharing forum and not a policy-making body.

Contact us

If you are a housing CEO who would like to join, please email james.tickell@campbelltickell.com or greg.campbell@campbelltickell.com.

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Latest highlights, December – January

1. Members took a moment to remember Ian Winslet, ex-Suffolk Housing CEO and more recently a key player for ARK, who passed away after a short illness. They expressed their shock and sadness regarding the sad news.

Energy:

2. With the ongoing rise in cost of energy, members discussed energy saving tips and approaches to heating homes.
3. In general, members were against the requests for log burners from residents due to maintenance costs and health and safety issues.
4. Members discussed the need to offer compensation for lack of heating in winter months, after a service failure of more than 24 hours.
5. Members also compared their energy providers and the different quotes they have received. Some social landlords advised those who haven't done it already to do an energy audit as it is an efficient way to save money on energy bills and cut unnecessary costs.

Rent payments:

6. Members continued the discussion on rent increases, following the announcement of a cap at 7%. A large group of social landlords shared that they would follow the rent cap for all tenancy types, including shared ownership, while others are waiting for the detailed guidance from the RSH before making a decision. Some supported housing landlords will stick with the full uplift of CPI+1%.
7. Members were not unduly alarmed with the general low rate of rent arrears compared to precedent years.

Cost-of-living crisis:

8. Members continued to share the measures they will take from April 2024 onwards to help their staff with the current cost-of-living crisis. Among the different propositions, a salary increase between 5% and 8%, unconsolidated lump payments, interest free loans, and gift cards were discussed.
9. Members mostly rejected the idea of closing their offices on Mondays and Fridays as a way to save costs. They shared the view that this would only bring modest gain compared to the value they place in providing their staff with a common place for work. Also, shutting down the office for 2 days a week would mean shifting the utility costs on their staff. Instead, social landlords generally preferred downsizing their office space and offering the possibility to work from home a couple of days a week to their employees.

General / sharing of knowledge and good practices:

10. The group continues to be a space that encourages and facilitates best practice between social housing providers.
11. Members discussed the use of new technology (e.g., video inspection: where tenant can contact members of staff using their mobile phone camera to show the issue directly) to monitor DMC cases and smoke alarms. Those already using these technologies were satisfied with them and recommended their use to other members.
12. Members also discussed the different ways to best deal with out-of-hours emergency calls, including using Twitter and other social medias (for customers to message them directly and flag any issue), or other external providers and call centres. Regarding the appropriate response time, some shared their practice of 24 hours for an emergency and around 2-3 weeks for routine maintenance.
13. In general, several members who expressed a view were largely against performance-related pay for CEOs, as it doesn't align well with the affordable housing sector's values; they favoured a median benchmarked salary for all staff instead. Members also shared their CEO appraisal framework with meeting regularity varying from 6-month reviews to yearly appraisals.
14. CT shared with group members the link to the latest Board Pay Survey for 2023.
15. A new CIO WhatsApp group was created with already 40 members.
16. 65 CEOs attended the zoom call organised by CT to discuss current developments in the social housing sector and the impact on their own roles and leadership styles.