

## Housing chief executives - WhatsApp summary

November - December 2024

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### A note to readers

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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 260 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

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If you are a housing CEO who would like to join, please email [james.tickell@campbelltickell.com](mailto:james.tickell@campbelltickell.com) or [greg.campbell@campbelltickell.com](mailto:greg.campbell@campbelltickell.com).

### Latest highlights, November - December

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#### ***Retrofit and net-zero***

1. There was some debate about including net-zero costs in 30-year business plans, leading to a poll. Most members indicated that they would be stress testing the costs but not including them in their business plans, whilst the next most common answer was that costs would be included in full. Many acknowledged the challenge of accurately forecasting future technological advancements and regulatory expectations.
2. Members shared their experiences of the costs of bringing their existing homes up to the new energy efficiency standards, with some sharing that it had been more cost effective for them to demolish sites rather than retrofit them.

#### ***Remuneration and recruitment***

3. Members continued to express concerns about the costs of employer national insurance contribution increases and the potential limiting impact it will have on pay increases. Members shared their budgeting decisions around annual pay increases, with values ranging from 2-3%.

4. A discussion was held about the benefits and drawbacks of recruiting to Chair of the Board from within the organisation over external recruitment. Members shared a range of experiences with either approach and emphasised the need to balance reputation and integrity with finding the right talent and cultural fit for the organisation.
5. Members also shared best practice around recognising staff achievements.

### ***Use of commercial property***

6. There was some discussion on the potential uses of commercial property, with concerns raised about ensuring alignment with the organisation's social values and purpose. Members cautioned against making moral judgments and instead emphasised considering noise, disruption to neighbours, and the impact on the local area.

### ***Smoking policies***

7. There was discussion about smoke-free tenancies, particularly in supported housing. Members shared concerns about increased fire incidents due to smoking indoors and suggested misting systems to reduce damage. However, many felt a smoking ban would be hard to enforce and could exclude vulnerable groups needing housing.

### ***Sharing policies, processes and recommendations***

8. The group continues to be a place for members to share policies and processes. Policy and process examples requested related to: escalation policies, for enabling staff at all levels to flag breaches in regulations; development and acquisitions processes; and procurement policy and procedures.
9. Members requested recommendation on grant finding and fundraising tools, training for lone front-line housing staff, and internal auditors.
10. Requests were also made for case studies and sector-led research on corporate fraud, cyber security risk assessments, as well as the benefits of using capital grants for social rent.