

Housing chief executives - WhatsApp summary

March - April 2025

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 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

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

Latest highlights, March – April 2025

Ombudsman's consultation and Government announcements

1. Members discussed their thoughts in response to the Housing Ombudsman consultation on its Business Plan 2025-26 and Corporate Strategy. Some members expressed reservations about any significant changes coming from the consultation.
2. There was a positive reaction to the Chancellor's announcement on Tuesday 25 March of a £2 billion interim injection of investment to support building of 18,000 new social and affordable homes.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

3. Some members noted lower scores relating to Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and the potential influence of other community factors on this measure. There was a sense that questions could be amended to improve the accuracy of measures.
4. Research was shared highlighting the influence of anti-social behaviour (ASB), psychological wellbeing and neighbourhood safety over outcomes within the measure 'Satisfaction that home is safe', as opposed to the intended measure of building and fire safety.

The planning system for delivering new homes

5. There was discussion on proposed changes to the planning system to enable the delivery of new homes. Comments covered recruitment of planners, local democracy, team cohesiveness, strategy, and the effects of biodiversity net gain and nutrient neutrality on the planning process.
6. Discussion further focused on staffing levels, particularly the shortage of qualified planners in local authorities, and pay and perceptions of public sector jobs.

Governance

7. A poll was shared, asking members whether they sit as CEO on the Board of their organisation. 89 members voted 'CEO is NOT on the Board', and 62 members voted 'CEO on the Board'.
8. Members discussed the benefits of having the CEO sit on the Board, such as an improved dynamic. Discussion also highlighted difficulties for registered charities to have CEOs as Board Members due to the need for Charity Commission approval.
9. A discussion was held around approaches to committee structures, such as whether to have a Development and Assets Committee, or a Customer Focus Committee.
10. A poll was shared, asking members whether they pay an additional amount for their Board Member who is the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). 3 members do pay Board Members an additional amount, while 70 members do not.
11. Further discussions highlighted specific arrangements, such as the use of a 'special responsibilities' payment for Board Members, and noting the time-consuming nature of the MRC role.

Operations

12. Some members discussed the monitoring and checking of contractors on fire, legionella, asbestos, gas, electrics and lifts (FLAGEL) inspections.
13. A discussion was held for associations with scattered stock, reviewing approaches to property inspections for the Housing Health and Safety Rating System/Awaab's Law forthcoming changes. Annual inspections were discussed, embedded into annual gas visits from engineers. Training needs and capacity was mentioned in the discussion around effective coverage and regular visiting.
14. There was a conversation about consortium based retrofit approaches. Some members had experience delivering Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2 (SHDF 2) through a development consortium of Housing Associations.

Bank loans

15. Several members discussed their experience of bank loans, including borrowing and repayment. There was frustration around bank decision-making, limited sector knowledge and support. Others had positive experiences with low interest rates and supportiveness.

Software and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

16. One member asked for recommendations of Board Portal options. Several members shared the software that they used, discussing value for money, simplicity and device compatibility.
17. Members discussed guidance, policies and training around the use of AI. Some members shared that they had a policy within the organisation, whereas others were developing one. A policy document was shared within the group.