CAMPBELL TICKELL

Housing chief executives - WhatsApp summary

September – October 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, September – October 2025

Reform

1. A question was raised about the impact of Reform locally and whether members have seen any changes in terms of funding or policies. Members commented that although they have not seen any changes to direct policies – likely due to the minority power currently held by Reform and something that could change in the future – many had seen an increase in the amount of racist rhetoric and commentary on public forums, particularly around social housing.

2. Members agreed that, although it may not always help diffuse a situation, having facts and figures ready was helpful. This could include data on local immigration figures, incidents and how they were dealt with.

3. One member had held a session with all staff and contractors to brief them on the lettings process and other key policies so that they could combat any misinformation heard. They had also highlighted this information on their website.

4. There was also a discussion about how this could be impacting some members of staff and the need for leadership and support to those potentially affected. Members shared examples of when either they or colleagues had been subjected to verbal abuse.

5. Collaboration with other local partners – especially community safety teams – was also seen as important.

Solar panels and fire safety

6. There was a discussion about the use of solar panels on roofs given recent examples of them causing fires. One member agreed that this was a concern but wondered how else to achieve the energy efficiency improvements expected of landlords and likened the situation to being stuck between a rock and a hard place. Another member shared direct experience of this situation where the batteries attached to the solar panels had caught fire causing significant damage to a residential block and the rehousing of a number of families (no one was hurt during the fire).

Awaab's Law

7. The introduction of Awaab's Law in October generated a conversation about how to classify repairs and therefore, what the response time should be. The general consensus across numerous members was that relying on Category 1 or 2 hazards as defined by the HHSRS was now insufficient and vulnerability and wider circumstances must be taken into account. That each case should now be assessed individually.

8. Another issue raised with the HHSRS tool is the variation in interpretation of what counts as a Category 1 or 2 hazard, with internal vs external surveyors having different views.

9. Another member shared that they have now trained all their staff in the new regulations and also trained all contractors and trades to See It Report It (SIRI).

Board papers

10. Members shared rough figures on the length of their board papers and discussed their appropriateness. The range was between 65-300 pages, with the majority at just over 100. Two members were in the process of commissioning external support to refine their board reporting, citing that it can be difficult to get the balance right between effective oversight and length of documentation.

11. One member shared their approach: keeping KPIs and other monitoring data as online documents, along with standard reports on arrears, health and safety etc.

Board salaries

12. One member started a discussion about board salaries – when and how they increase. There was a divide between participating members as to whether or not it should be the same as staff groups and the pros and cons. Three members increase Board salaries in line with cost of living increases automatically, as per staff groups. Four members said that they benchmarked salaries every two or three years, some using external consultants to undertake the review.

13. One member warned against a situation where there are large increases every three years as it creates difficult optics in the rest of organisation. It is also helpful to be able to say that those at the 'top' are treated in the same way as everyone else. However, another said that annual changes linked to staff increases can also be difficult to sustain financially.

Customer engagement

14. Members discussed customer engagement with respect to rent increases and tips for making sure that customer voice is part of the decision-making process. Three members suggested giving tenants a few different scenarios that quantify the impact on, for example, the number of bathrooms or heating systems they could refurbish or new homes they would be able to build.

15. Another suggestion was to designate one or more people around the table to act as the voice of different types of tenants, e.g. those on waiting lists.

16. Others also commented that it was important to incorporate this feedback into board papers along with examples of tenants' voices. One member shared that they took the same approach with Board members suggesting rent freezes – providing examples on what would be lost / gained for either approach.

'No access' properties

17. 'No access' properties were discussed twice by members. First in the context of repairs, with a few members sharing ideas on how to reduce the number of 'no access' repairs or appointments. One member sends an automatic text confirming the appointment, another text on the morning of the appointment and then asks the operative to call the individual when they finish the previous job.

18. Another asked about the percentage of 'no access' properties in stock condition surveys. Four people shared their figures with a range from 6.5% - 25% (with the 25% being a work in progress).

19. Another noted that 'no access' is sometimes used as an indicator of potential tenancy fraud.

Scam phone calls

20. Three members of the group shared that they had been called by scammers pretending to be calling from a housing association or repairs organisation, offering to help with an outstanding repair. There was agreement that, unfortunately, this type of scam was likely to be successful with some customers.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies

21. One member asked for advice on the process of changing Assured Shorthold Tenancies which are soon to be abolished as part of the Renters Reform Bill. Another member explained that they had already migrated over to other contracts and that it had been a significant piece of work in terms of preparation and workload.

Requests for examples or templates

- Conducting a skills audit
- Asset Liabilities Register – how to bring it alive for their board
- An internal audit on data integrity
- Organisational structures
- Cyber security policy and strategic risk register
- Advice on the impact of Mazur vs Charles Russell Speechlys.