

Housing chief executives - WhatsApp summary

March – April 2026

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

Customer engagement

1. One member sought advice on how to manage persistent complainants, and others shared their experiences of the impact it can have. Group members shared their Unacceptable and Acceptable Behaviour policies and re-emphasised the need to ensure care for the customer is considered.
2. The robustness of transactional TSM surveys were discussed. The group recognised that survey methods can affect results (digital vs. face-to-face), meaning there is a need for Boards to have process assurance.

HR and People

3. Members discussed pay for staff members doing shift work, and shared advice on tracking overtime in an agile work environment. Discussions indicated that organisations largely rely on trust, however alternative suggestions included timesheets, updated Outlook calendars and automatic logging of shift start and finish times.

4. There was a discussion about Company Secretary roles. Most respondents (10 out of 11) shared that they use internal talent to fulfil the role, such as (for smaller organisations) existing PAs or members of the executive team.
5. A question was raised about organisations' tiered sick pay arrangements for certain groups of staff (care, supported housing, or DLO staff) and the impact of changing these policies. Members shared that worst case financial modelling of this change had tended to overly pessimistic, but questioned whether changes would impact absence levels, length of sickness, or overall staffing cost.
6. There was discussion about the costs and benefits of secondment and shared-role arrangements between organisations; costs mentioned included VAT implications whilst benefits related to experiences of collaborative working.
7. There was a discussion about frontline staff being asked to conduct day-to-day tasks for residents beyond their job descriptions, such as changing lightbulbs or retrieving items from lofts. Members expressed concern over liability and health and safety risks and highlighted the need for need for clear boundaries, risk management, and HR guidance on this issue.

Fraud and Financial

8. One participant asks whether any organisations have been affected by the ECO4 alleged fraud reported in Inside Housing. Some members shared that they had work completed by one named firm, noting that they were seeking additional quality assurance and had notified the Serious Fraud Office and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).
9. Smaller providers were asked which accounting packages they used. Group members shared a range of options and discussed their various benefits and drawbacks, with preferences given to those which integrate well with other modules and offer multi-use functionality.

Impact of Global Geopolitics

10. In the context of the current situation in the Middle East and the resulting increase in the cost of fuel, three group members shared that they are considering temporarily increasing their colleague fuel allowance. Members shared their positions on the issue: two noted that staff consultation groups had asked to increase the mileage rate above that of the HMRC benchmark; 13 group members said they were still using the HMRC rate; four members reported that they had already increased their rates. Increased rates included:
 - £0.55/mile
 - £0.50/mile and a £200/month lump sum
 - HMRC +£0.10 for essential users, and £0.50 for other users
 - HMRC, but no reduction after 10,000 miles
11. The practicality of the range and charging logistics of EVs for repair operatives was discussed considering the rising cost of fuel.
12. One member shared their risk assessment of the conflict to the group; other members were grateful for the insight.

Procurement

13. Discussions focused on navigating the impact of the Procurement Act 2003 on the purchase of Section106 homes, which now requires publication of an award notice and an 8-day standstill period before signing. Procurement policies for Small/Medium providers were shared offline, and members discussed their personal experience and advice they had received.

Health and Safety

14. There was discussion on upper tier waste carrier licences for charities, with various advice shared around disposing hazardous waste such as asbestos.
15. Another discussion around Health and Safety touched on external extreme risk adverse contractor policies limiting remedial works and development.