

Why are we looking at stock transfer?

A Housing Stock Options Appraisal was carried out in Fenland during 2004 and 2005. This involved looking at whether different options for the future ownership and management of council houses would benefit tenants.

As part of this, all tenants were asked about what improvements they would like to see to their homes and neighbourhoods. This led to the identification of the 'Fenland Standard' that included:

- Better home security
- Off-road parking
- A full-time warden for each sheltered scheme
- Internal improvements that go beyond the government's minimum standard

There is a shortage of affordable housing in Fenland and tenants also wanted to see more affordable homes for rent being provided.

The process was managed by a tenant-led working group that looked at:

- Stock Retention – the Council continuing to own and manage council housing
- Arms Length Management – the Council continuing to own council housing, but setting up an arms length management organisation that would manage the council housing
- Private Finance Initiative – the Council continuing to own council housing, but seeking a private partner to manage the housing and invest in improvements
- Stock Transfer – the Council would transfer ownership and management of council housing to a housing association

The Working Group found that while the Council could continue to own and manage council housing, it could not afford all the services and improvements that tenants wanted. One problem that the Council has is that over £2million of the rent that it collects has to be paid into a government pool to fund housing in other parts of England.

The Working Group found that if the Council were to transfer the homes to a Housing Association, the Housing Association would be able to afford the services and improvements that tenants want. It is estimated that the Housing Association would 'buy' the homes from the Council for £20million. This would enable the Council to fund the building of more affordable homes for rent in Fenland.

The tenant-led working group therefore recommended that the Council should transfer its council homes to a housing association. In a consultation held during May 2005 this recommendation was supported by 52% of tenants who responded.

So – the Council is now planning for a stock transfer. Tenants are fully involved in this process. It is expected that a ballot of tenants will be held in November 2006. Stock transfer will only happen if a majority of tenants who vote support the stock transfer proposal.