

Adrian Waite (Independent Consultancy Services) Limited

4th March 2018

The Editor,
Cumberland News,
Newspaper House,
Dalston Road,
Carlisle.
CA2 5UA.
Sent by email.

Dear Sir,

The article 'Worry as Association Merger talks are shrouded in secrecy' by Stephen Blease in last week's 'Cumberland News' is an excellent summary of the issues that are raised by the proposal that Impact Housing Association should be taken over by the Riverside Group.

However, I think your line '**when** in fact it does take place' should really read '**if** in fact it does take place'. As the current Chair of Impact concedes, for the takeover to take place there will have to be 'a formal vote by shareholders'. This is not yet a 'done deal'.

Impact Housing Association's mission has always been to serve communities, not just by providing affordable homes, but by providing a range of other services to achieve the objective of 'Improvement through Action'.

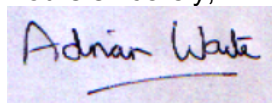
It is therefore important that Impact's shareholding members, tenants and the communities within which Impact works understand fully what is being proposed.

The government may want to see smaller housing associations merged into larger ones. The Riverside Group may want to expand by taking over other housing associations. Impact's current board may favour the takeover. But – what really matters is what Impact's tenants and other members of communities want. Do they want locally based housing associations that 'shape places' as well as providing houses? Or do they want large housing associations that operate nationally, have economies of scale and limit themselves to just providing houses?

When councils transfer council houses to housing associations they must hold a ballot of the tenants. The transfer only goes ahead if most tenants are in favour. I think that Impact should hold a similar ballot on the proposed takeover – but they do not intend to.

So - the final decision rests with the shareholding members. I therefore suggest that all Impact tenants and anyone else with an interest in the communities that Impact serves should apply to become a shareholding member. A share costs £1. On their website Impact state that applications are welcome from: Tenants, Residents, Individuals from the communities where they work, Shared ownership tenants, Individuals who have skills, Local community organisations, Local voluntary organisations and Stakeholder agencies. An application form can be downloaded from the Impact website.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Waite
Former Chair of Impact