

# AWICS Housing News – April 2014

## Contents:

- Self-Financing, Rents and Service Charges in Wales
- Impact Housing wins Inside Housing award for Grasmere scheme
- Local Growth Fund and new Council houses
- Budget 2014 – The Implications for Housing
- Severnside Housing Association, Digital Inclusion and Learning
- National Housing Federation Conference
- Service Charges Seminar & Workshop



Broadgate Gardens at Grasmere, an Impact Housing Association scheme.

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## Self-Financing, Rents and Service Charges in Wales

Social housing in Wales is going through a period of profound change. Self-financing is to be introduced next year and offers significant opportunities to Councils to meet and exceed the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, improve business planning and asset management and build new homes to meet the needs of individuals and communities. There is also a new rent policy being introduced to housing associations this year and to local authorities next that will base rents on house values, market rents and local earnings; bring about convergence between local authority and housing association rents; and oblige local authorities to separate out service charges. This results in significant challenges and opportunities for Welsh local authorities and housing associations.

The Welsh Government is proposing to introduce self-financing to Welsh local authority housing revenue accounts in April 2015. This will involve the abolition of housing subsidy, local authorities making a buy-out payment to HM Treasury and the imposition of a 'borrowing cap'. The details of the settlement are currently being discussed by the Welsh Government and the local authorities. While the Welsh Government and the Treasury have agreed the total amount of debt to be taken on by the local authorities and the total borrowing limit that will apply, it remains to be decided how these sums are to be allocated between individual authorities.

The current housing revenue account subsidy system means that eleven Welsh housing authorities make payments totalling over £70million to HM Treasury via the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government has been in negotiations with HM Treasury to end the housing revenue account subsidy system in Wales for a number of years. Agreement has now been reached on the following points:

- Welsh authorities can buy themselves out of the housing revenue account subsidy system by committing to a revenue stream to Treasury in the form of interest payments of £40million a year.
- The exact amount of the buy-out sum will depend on the interest rate on a date to be specified near to 31<sup>st</sup> March. The amount will be borrowed from the Public Works Loans Board.

- A total borrowing cap of £1.85billion will be put in place and legislation must be introduced to control the borrowing cap.
- Exit from the subsidy system can be achieved through voluntary agreements to allow exit by April 2015, rather than waiting for United Kingdom legislation to be enacted, which would have delayed the process

Local authorities and housing associations are currently responsible for setting the rents for social housing properties within a financial and policy framework established by the Welsh Government. The rent policies for local authorities and housing associations have evolved over many years. The underlying approach for each is entirely different and has constrained attempts to achieve greater consistency between them.

The Welsh Government has long had a policy of rent convergence that should result in social housing tenants of similar types of housing in the same area paying similar rents. At present, Registered Social Landlords' rents tend to be higher. Rents for each sector are currently set in different ways:

- Local authority rents are set within the context of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy system with the Welsh Government providing guideline weekly rents.
- For Registered Social Landlords, the Welsh Government sets maximum rents for six key property types which when averaged should be at or below a benchmark level.

For the stock retaining local authorities, the Welsh Government sets 'Local Authority Guideline Rents' that are used to calculate the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy each year. The Housing (Wales) Bill will abolish the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy system that will mean that the current guideline rent system will also end. This means that local authorities will have no system to set rents and the Welsh Assembly Government will have no powers to influence the level of rents for retained authorities.

For local authority rents, one consequence of abolishing the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System is that the existing guideline rent system will end. The proposals in the Bill will enable Welsh Ministers to continue to influence the level of rents in local authority accommodation.

The Welsh Government has developed a new policy for social housing rents that will be applied consistently by all social landlords and reflect the type, size, location of quality of the landlord's properties. The policy will be implemented by housing associations in April 2014 and by the stock retaining local authorities following exit from the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy system.

The Welsh Government will set standards to be met by stock holding local authorities for rents and service charges. This will provide the legislative framework for the new rent policy and ensure that rents and service charges are clearly and separately identified. This will create greater transparency in payments made by tenants to the stock retaining local authorities.

The Welsh Government also proposes minor amendments to the existing legislation relating to reasonable rents for local authorities and to standards for housing associations. The latter will ensure there is a consistent approach to setting standards for local authorities and housing associations. This means that the standard can set out the rules that need to be followed, to ensure that guidance on the standards can be revised and require Welsh Ministers to consult on changes to the guidance.

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The proposals on rents and service charges for local authority tenants aim to increase transparency and address anomalies that currently exist between different social landlords.

In some, though not all, local authority areas there is pooling of service charges. This means that some tenants are paying for services they do not receive because the costs are spread between all of the landlord's tenants. This practice will come to an end with service charges in future being disaggregated and clearly identified.

The changes may result in increased service charges for tenants who do receive eligible services. Tenants unhappy with a service charge would be able to raise the matter with the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

The new policy, including the requirement to fully de-pool service charges is a good opportunity to ensure that costs are fully and correctly identified and take into account any changes that may be needed in view of welfare reform so that the Council can be certain of securing the maximum revenue possible. This is very important given the current financial climate and also a good opportunity to engage with residents as this is an important part of implementing the new rent policy.

The unpooling of service charges can represent a particular challenge in cases where there is no tradition of making service charges and existing financial information systems may not hold financial data in a form that allows them to be calculated easily.

I am currently assisting Denbighshire County Council with the implementation of self-financing and the introduction of service charges. I am available to assist other authorities in Wales in a similar way. To discuss this further please contact me on [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk) or 017683-52165.

We are holding a seminar and workshop 'All You Want to Know about Welsh Social Housing Finance' in Cardiff on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014. For further information please see <http://www.awics.co.uk/walesfin.asp>

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### **Impact Housing wins Inside Housing award for Grasmere scheme**

For the second year running, Inside Housing's panel of judges have applied their strict criteria to a huge number of competition entries to pin down the very best affordable housing schemes in the United Kingdom. Last year, when Inside Housing ran their first list of the top fifty United Kingdom affordable developments, which the Homes and Communities Agency was also pleased to endorse, they said they looked forward to similarly high standards in 2014. They say that they were not disappointed.

They received entries from landlords and their partners from across the United Kingdom covering a total of 8,059 new homes. This is an increase of more than 2,000 on last year and demonstrates the positive impact that social landlords are having on the quality of homes and local economies around the British Isles. For the first time, Impact Housing Association, of which I am Chair submitted an entry – for an innovative scheme in Grasmere in the Lake District that we completed without grant.

The judging team spent many hours poring over entries in preparation for the ultimate debate over who made the final cut. This was no easy task and 'Inside Housing' points out that there

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are many landlords with schemes of which they can be rightly proud but for which there was sadly no room in the top fifty.

The judges picked out projects that, it was felt, best embodied what makes fantastic regeneration, specialist, small, large and sustainable developments. Speaking of Impact's Grasmere scheme, Janet Askew, one of the judges, said:

*"The reason I jumped at this one is it's the first affordable housing to be built in 30 years in a village like Grasmere."*

The scheme provided fifteen affordable homes at a cost of £1.79 million and was one of only five small schemes to make the list.

The scheme is in the grounds of Grasmere Youth Hostel and is the first new affordable housing in this area of the Lake District for more than three decades. It was oversubscribed by 600%. Impact Housing Association developed the twelve houses and three flats and then sold two houses at market price to Lakeland Housing Trust, a local charity, to cross-subsidise the remainder of the project. The Lake District National Park Authority was keen for it to be 'more innovative than a 'Beatrix Potter pastiche' so the design uses non-traditional materials such as composite slate external wall panels.

Mike Muir, Impact's Chief Executive, said:

*"Well, we said we'd have a go at a national award this year and, to get off to a flying start, we submitted Grasmere to the 'Inside Housing' magazine's Affordable Housing Awards (one of the prestigious ones). And, the result is..... We're in the Top fifty overall and the Top five Small Schemes. They don't narrow it down any further, so we could actually have been TOP!! Well done, everyone..."*

Councillor Ian Stewart (Liberal Democrat) of South Lakeland Council said:

*"Only the top 50? Great work: we need more of it! And let's trust that we can provide more opportunities."*

And Councillor Peter Thornton (Liberal Democrat) Leader of the Council said:

*"I believe that the top 50 aren't yet ranked? So it could be number one?"*

Unfortunately, the current grant arrangements make it difficult for viable affordable housing schemes to be developed in areas such as the Lake District. Consequently, Impact is taking an opportunistic approach, developing schemes in an innovative manner whenever and wherever the opportunity arises, and working in partnership with local authorities and voluntary organisations.

Further information about the Grasmere scheme is available on the Impact website at: <http://www.impacthousing.org.uk/news/first-affordable-housing-scheme-grasmere-30-years>

In March, Impact Housing hosted their second annual celebration event at their Foyer in Kendal. Awards were given to young people for: Community Involvement, Best Resident Organised Event, Best Suggestion and an Outstanding Achievement Award.

Jo Scarlett, Service Manager, said:

*"It was so inspiring to be involved in the event and relive all the amazing achievements that young people have made over the last 12 months. Events such as this are vital in empowering young people, enhancing self-esteem and developing aspirations – all of which is key to moving on to independent living, the ultimate goal of our Foyer service."*

Oscar style statuettes were presented by Diana Matthews, High Sheriff of Cumbria, Mike Muir Chief Executive of Impact Housing and Simon Thomas from Staff of Life Restaurant in Kendal.

Simon visited South Lakes Foyer and inspired young residents to make 'real bread' just before Christmas. Simon then led other restaurants to become involved in sharing their signature dishes. He was welcomed back to the ceremony to present the Outstanding Achievement Award.

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### **Local Growth Fund and new Council Houses**

The government has published details of how local authorities can access the £300million additional borrowing headroom that was promised in the budget to help them to build new affordable homes. There is going to be a competitive bidding process in which councils will have to gain the approval of the Local Enterprise Partnership before being considered. Given that the Local Government Association asked for 'borrowing caps' to be raised by £7billion with no strings attached the government's scheme appears to be a small concession. After all, they are only giving councils approval to borrow money at their own expense!

In April 2014 the Department for Communities & Local Government published their bidding document 'Local Growth Fund – Housing Revenue Account Borrowing Programme (2015/16 and 2016/17)'. In launching the document, Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government said:

*"We have untied the hands of councils so they can take more responsibility for housing in their area. Councils have built more homes in the last three years than under the whole of the last government... But there is still more to do. Today we are offering extra borrowing powers so councils can build more homes. We are also making it easier for councils to sell surplus and redundant property for new affordable housing, and they should consider what land they can release for the benefit of their local community."*

And Danny Alexander, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said:

*"This additional borrowing flexibility, together with funding from the sales of high value social homes and other forms of local investment will deliver 10,000 new affordable housing over the next few years – supporting the construction sector and providing new homes."*

£150million the funding is to be provided in 2015/16 and £150million in 2016/17. The scheme applies to all of England including London.



In the introduction the government states that:

*“Our aim is that local authorities will work with local Enterprise Partnerships, in support of local growth strategies, to increase the supply of housing locally. We want local authorities to do this in a way that will drive innovation through the use of locally owned land, the sale of high value vacant properties and partnership working to ensure that the impact on public sector borrowing is as low as possible and the supply of new homes is as high as possible. We intend to help a new way of thinking about value for money take root within the sector.”*

The main programme aims are identified as:

- To increase the supply of new affordable rent and affordable home ownership homes delivered by local authorities or through partnership arrangements, leveraging in private finance where necessary.
- To support innovation by local authorities in delivering and supporting new housing development.
- To drive down costs and support bids where affordable housing is developed with lower public sector costs.
- To require local authorities to maximise value for money of schemes including contributing their own resources such as bringing forward their own land and in particular disposing of high value vacant stock.
- To support local authorities that will be delivering new affordable homes that meet local needs and which are in line with the objectives of the local Strategic Economic Plan.
- To see new homes provided that address the demographic challenges facing social housing, including the need for homes of sizes that match household needs.

The intention of the programme is to provide new affordable rent homes (and where appropriate, affordable home ownership homes). Social rent provision will only be supported in very limited circumstances.

The paper is linked to welfare reform in that it states that where there is a particular shortage of smaller homes for under-occupying tenants to move to, the government would expect local assessments of needs and bids to reflect this, by including a high proportion of one and two bedroom properties, for example, by the conversion of existing stock to new affordable units or the provision of sheltered housing.

The government considers that local authorities should seek to reduce the amount of public sector borrowing needed to finance new supply wherever possible. Therefore, where additional housing revenue account borrowing is requested and to meet the government's aim of 10,000 new affordable homes, the government wishes to support schemes that maximise the following sources of funding:

- Bringing forward their own land for scheme development.
- Receipts generated through the disposal of existing stock, in particular high value stock.
- Other sources of cross-subsidy including surpluses from existing stock, activities and income.
- Other sources of funding or means of reducing the costs such as free or discounted public land (in addition to local authority land) and other contributions such as from the New Homes Bonus or Section 106 commuted sums.

The government also invites councils to consider sources of private finance and the contribution that it can make to the scheme either through partnership arrangements or a special purpose vehicle.

Local authorities that are able to deliver the most additional affordable housing units, either directly or in partnership with others, and are therefore able to offer good value for money are more likely to be successful.

A scheme may also facilitate the additional provision of market tenure housing including for cross-subsidy purposes.

Local authorities are required to consider the contribution that disposal of some vacant properties (both within and outside the social housing sector) can make to support the delivery of new homes.

The government does not expect to receive bids from local authorities that are proposing to fund their scheme on the back of additional borrowing capacity provided by conversions to affordable rent.

Local authorities that make successful bids for the additional borrowing will receive a new indebtedness determination to provide for additional housing revenue account borrowing (up to the agreed amount) that the authority undertook to finance capital expenditure on approved schemes during 2015/16 or 2016/17. Councils must then ensure that the expenditure is actually incurred during those years.

The government expects all bids to be consistent with the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan and is offering local authorities two bidding options:

- Making a firm, per scheme, bid for borrowing to support capital expenditure in either of the two financial years or across them.
- Submitting an expression of interest with an outline of the estimated borrowing required, per scheme, in 2016/17 with a firm bid to be submitted at a later date depending on the outcomes of the initial bidding round.

It is intended to issue allocations to cover both years of the programme but where an authority does not intend to start spending until 2016/17 it has until June 2014 to submit an expression of interest to be followed by a firm bid later. Authorities that wish to spend in 2015/16 must submit firm bids initially.

Schemes that are in receipt of grant under the Affordable Homes Programme will not be eligible. Similarly, the government does not generally expect affordable homes developed through this scheme to be built as part of a section 106 agreement.

In submitting bids authorities must:

- Set out their current amount of borrowing headroom (as at March 2014) and indicate to what extent that headroom is earmarked for other schemes or projects.
- Show how they are to maximise the use of their own assets.
- Show where there are wider scheme benefits.

The government has a preference for refurbishment over demolition. Consequently, where demolitions of existing structures are required, those are expected to be principally for redundant structures such as garages and other non-housing.

The paper includes a list of the information that is required when making a full bid for inclusion in the scheme or an expression of interest but a full bidding pro-forma will be issued later. The deadline for submission of bids is 16th June 2014.

The overall objective of bid assessment is to allocate additional borrowing to local authorities to supply new homes that will include affordable housing. Assessments will be based on:

- Meeting local needs and growth priorities in their proposed locations including building homes that address the demographic challenges facing social housing and any mismatch between existing stock and household needs.
- Offer good value for money (taking account of both additional housing revenue account borrowing requested and anticipated costs, as well as the extent to which bidders have applied their own resources). Good value for money proposals are likely to be enhanced where councils bring forward land, include disposal of high value assets and providers are efficient across their operating base, and where they seek to achieve procurement efficiencies in the delivery of new supply.
- Have a good and demonstrable prospect of early delivery within the programme timeframe.

Assessment will be at scheme level. Therefore, if a local authority submits a bid for additional borrowing for more than one scheme, it is possible that some or all scheme bids may not be successful.

Bids in London will be assessed by the Greater London Authority and in other areas by the Homes & Communities Agency.

Bids will be prioritised based on the following:

- Policy Elements / Growth Impact – Bids will be prioritised if they meet the policy objectives that the government is seeking to achieve.
- Value for Money – Including whether bids make best use of other sources of funding available.
- Delivery – Bids will be prioritised if they can demonstrate early scheme delivery.
- Technical Ability, Financial Information, Robustness and Good Standing – The assessors will look at the track record of the local authority to ensure their technical capacity and the viability of the schemes brought forward.

Ever since the introduction of self-financing in 2012 the sector has lobbied for the 'borrowing cap' to be either removed or increased arguing that it conflicted with the principles of 'localism' and prevented local authorities from building new homes to help to address the 'housing crisis'. Prior to the Autumn Statement of 2013 the Local Government Association had argued for the raising of the 'borrowing cap' by £7billion to enable councils to build an additional 60,000 affordable homes. In this context the raising of the 'borrowing cap' by £300million through a competitive bidding process can be seen as a very small move in the direction that local authorities would wish to travel.

It must be remembered that the government is not actually offering local authorities any more money. It is merely allowing them to borrow money at their own expense.

Nonetheless, it is expected that councils will bid to take advantage of this programme. To do this, they will have to demonstrate that they have schemes that will achieve government policy objectives and deliver value for money as well as demonstrating their ability to deliver.

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It must also be remembered that the government's objectives include maximising the use of other sources of funding as well as delivering the additional 10,000 new affordable homes.

The Local Growth Fund and building of new council houses will be addressed at our seminar and workshop 'Developments in local Authority Housing Finance' that will be held in London on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014. Details can be found at <http://www.awics.co.uk/devts.asp> . I am also available to assist authorities in the process as a management consultant. To enquire about this please contact me at [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk) .

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## **Budget 2014: The Implications for Housing**

The United Kingdom Government's Budget for 2014 was announced on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Its main provisions were:

- Local Government – Additional funds for infrastructure including flood defences and highway maintenance.
- Housing - A package of measures to support house building.
- Welfare - Welfare spending across 26 benefits, including elements of the Universal Credit, is to be capped at £119.5 billion from 2015/16. The government considers that restrictions on benefits, excluding payments to jobseekers and pensioners, are needed to keep government spending in check and protect Britain from future economic storms.
- Departmental Spending -£1 billion in cuts in departmental spending first announced in last year's Autumn Statement for three years from 2013/14 will now form a permanent part of departmental spending plans.
- Public Sector Pay – Restraint will continue. The government considers that this is necessary to ensure that the government will run a total spending surplus in times of growth, which they believe they are on track to reach in 2018/19. This includes ensuring that employers meet the full costs of public sector pension schemes.
- Pensions and Savings – makes reforms to pensions and savings schemes that are designed to benefit savers.

The principal announcements regarding housing were intended to support the building of 200,000 new homes and included:

- Public Land – The Strategic Land and Property Review has identified scope to generate £5 billion of receipts from land and property to support growth and drive efficiency, and Departments have already committed to release £3.5 billion. The Government Property Unit will also increase its work with local areas on better use of public sector assets, linking with Growth Deals, the Strategic Land and Property Review and the One Public Estate pilots.
- Help to Buy – The equity loan scheme will be extended to March 2020 with an extra £6 billion to help a further 120,000 households purchase a home. No changes to eligibility are being made. There are no changes to the Help to buy mortgage guarantee scheme that will end in December 2016.
- Builders' Finance Fund – Government will provide a £500 million recoverable Builders Finance Fund to provide loans to Small & Medium Enterprise developers for sites of fifteen to 250 units. Funding is available in 2015/16 and 2016/17 and will unlock 15,000 housing units stalled due to difficulty in accessing finance.

- Estate Regeneration- Government will establish a £150million loan fund to kick-start the regeneration of some of the 'worst' housing estates, with expressions of interest invited from private sector developers. Some expressions of interest have already been made through the Greater London Authority. Funding is available from 2015/16 to 2018/19 with repayment expected over 15 to 20 years (max).
- Custom Build - Government will consult on a new 'Right to Build' to give custom builders a right to buy a plot from councils. Government will be seeking a small number of councils to act as vanguards to test the model. A new £150million Serviced Plots loan fund (2014/15 to 2018/19) will help to provide up to 10,000 serviced plots for custom build. Councils will need to work with contractors or builders to access the fund. The Government will also look to make the Help to buy equity loan scheme available for custom build.
- Garden Settlements - A new Garden Settlement will be built in Ebbsfleet, selected because of its high-speed rail link to London, housing pressures in the south east and local support. Government will consult on an urban development corporation for the area to unlock up to 15,000 new homes – with up to £200million capital being made available. The UDC's proposed mandate will be to work with local councils, developers, and residents, to support and accelerate the development. Government will also, by Easter, publish a prospectus seeking expressions of interest for other locally-led garden cities.

Other housing measures included:

- Support for mortgage interest (SMI) will remain at its current higher level until 31st March 2016
- Changes to the way that high value properties registered as being owned by companies are treated in the tax system, this includes a higher 15% of stamp duty on qualifying properties worth more than £500,000. The measure is designed to prevent the use of company ownership as a way of avoiding stamp duty payments
- The troubled families programme will be expanded early to include an extra 40,000 families

Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government said:

*"This year's Budget shows how house building is central to our long-term economic plan, with measures to get Britain building and support to help hard-working people realise their dream of home ownership."*

*"Today's multi-billion package will boost house building, particularly on brownfield land, create new jobs and allow up to an additional 120,000 aspiring homeowners to buy a home."*

*"The moves will get workers back on site across the country, including at large sites like Ebbsfleet, help smaller builders to restart work on stalled developments, and make sure people who want to build their own home can."*

A comprehensive briefing paper on the budget and its implications for housing and local government is available on our website. It can be freely downloaded from:  
<http://www.awics.co.uk/dynamicdata/data/docs/budget%202014%20-%20briefing%20paper.pdf>

## **Sevenside Housing Association, Digital Inclusion and Learning**

In April 2014 it was announced that Sevenside Housing Association's Digital Inclusion Project, aimed at reducing the digital exclusion felt by their customers and the wider-community, has made it through to the shortlist for a national award that celebrates the best community projects.

Sevenside's Digital Inclusion project, that ensures residents have access to computers, online services and the support and training needed to increase their skills and confidence to access and benefit from the digital world, was among those selected from almost 180 entries from the National Housing Federation's Community Impact Awards.

The awards celebrate the difference that England's housing associations make through creating opportunities and bringing local communities together. More than sixty projects were shortlisted, across four categories: Better neighbourhoods; Greener living; Health and wellbeing, and Investing in people.

The National Housing Federation will announce the regional winner in Birmingham on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2014. The winner will then join others from around the country in the national shortlist and a national judging day will decide which of the final category winners go to the national finals in central London on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

David Orr, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, said:

*"We've had some fantastic submissions through for this year's awards and the judges have had a tough job to do to select those shortlisted. Sevenside should feel very proud indeed – it is no small feat to have made it this far. It'll be all eyes now to see who goes through to the finals."*

Sarah Boden, chief executive of Sevenside Housing, added:

*"We are extremely proud that our innovative Digital Inclusion project has been shortlisted for the National Housing Federation's Community Impact Awards. Our whole approach to digital inclusion has been driven by our customers' needs and our objective to develop sustainable, thriving communities."*

The Association also launched its 2014 Learning Programme in March 2014; a skills and training programme to help their customers get back into work, learn new skills and deal with Welfare Reform changes. The launch event held at the Shrewsbury Central Baptist Church, Claremont Street, Shrewsbury attracted 170 visitors and a staggering 274 courses were booked on the day.

The 2014 Learning Programme is packed full of free short courses and training events covering a diverse range of subjects, including 'Improving your Maths and English', 'Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate in Catering' and 'The Welfare Reform and You', with a large number of the courses accredited. Over 350 people attended courses last year, six secured employment, two signed up to attend college courses and one person enjoyed their training so much they signed up to become a trainer.

There is also good news for anyone who is on Job Seekers Allowance and required, under the new Claimant Commitment, to evidence that they are spending 35 hours a week seeking and improving their chances of finding employment as the Learning Programme brochure has a 'Claimant Course Tick' indicating which courses can assist with the completion of commitment hours.

Training courses will be delivered by Severnside staff and partner agencies including the British Red Cross, Shropshire Fire and Rescue, Shropshire FA, The Prince's Trust, Relate, Social Telecoms and many more. Claire Poulson, Community Development Officer, at Severnside, who is responsible for managing the Learning Programme, said:

*"This year's Learning Programme is bigger than ever and full of courses designed to help people get back into work, manage their finances and deal with changes owing to the Welfare Reform Act. Courses are free to Severnside residents and there is a small charge to non-residents."*

*"We are absolutely delighted that so many people came to the launch event and signed up to attend our courses. I would recommend that people take a look at the learning programme brochure on the Severnside website as no matter what your age or ability there really is something for everyone."*

'AWICS' has just completed a management consultancy project on value for money for Severnside Housing Association. Adrian Waite has recently spoken at National Housing Federation seminars on service charges.

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## About 'AWICS'

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## ADVERTISEMENT

### NATIONAL HOUSING FEDERATION

#### **Regulation Conference 2014; Regulation in a changing world**

30 April 2014, Doubletree by Hilton, **London West End**

8 May 2014, Renaissance Hotel, **Manchester**

How can regulation remain effective and relevant, and still allow the sector to evolve? Join us at the Regulation Conference in London or Manchester, which will put the current proposals to revise the standards into the broader context of regulatory development, and set the likely direction of future travel

Key speakers include:

- **Julian Ashby**, Chair, Regulation Committee, HCA (London)
- **Matthew Bailes**, Executive Director, Regulation, HCA (Manchester)
- **James Tickell**, Director, Campbell Tickell
- **Clare Miller**, Group Director of Governance, Affinity Sutton

Why attend?

- Be first to hear the HCA's thinking on current proposals and wider process of change
- Directly question the experts on the regulatory pressures and drivers for change
- Two dates available – London or Manchester
- Network with other housing associations and share ideas

Who should attend?

- Chief executives
- Chairs
- Finance managers and directors
- Operations directors and managers
- Risk managers

Fees: Member £275, Associate member £315, Non-member £345

For more information visit: <http://www.housing.org.uk/events/browse/regulation-conference-2014-london>

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PLACE AN ADVERTISEMENT IN THE AWICS HOUSING NEWS  
PLEASE CONTACT [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk)**

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## All You Want To Know About Service Charges

**April 2014**

We are holding our seminar and workshop 'All You Want to Know about Service Charges' in April. This seminar and workshop is designed to give an introduction and overview to this important subject and is fully up to date with all developments.

Service charges are an integral part of landlords' work in financing value for money services and sustaining customer satisfaction. They have always been relatively complex but with landlords, leaseholders and tenants facing increased financial challenges and with increased legal complexity there is an increased need to understand how service charging works.



Flats in China Walk, Lambeth.

This seminar and workshop is presented mainly from a financial point of view and is designed for people who are not experts in service charges, but who need to understand the basics and achieve an overview of what is going on. It is suitable for councillors, board members, housing managers, finance staff, tenant representatives, members of the service charges team who have limited experience and others who realise that an understanding of service charges can place them at an advantage!

We believe in quality rather than quantity and so numbers at each session are limited to twenty people to permit the maximum possible interaction and participation.

### What the Session Covers:

The session will answer the following questions:

- How do Service Charges work:
  - In Housing Associations and Local Authorities?
  - For Leaseholders and Tenants?
- How are service charges calculated?
- How to de-pool service charges?
- When are service charges eligible for housing benefit?
- How to ensure excellent customer service?

The session includes a participatory case study and is accompanied by a very useful 100 page book that is designed for reference after the session entitled:

### **"All You Want To Know About Service Charges"**

#### **Venue and Date:**

**London:** Novotel Hotel, Waterloo – 29<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

For more information or to book a place, please visit: <http://www.awics.co.uk/schs.asp>

This seminar and workshop is also available in-house. For further information about in-house sessions, please contact Adrian Waite on 017683-52165 or [adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:adrian.waite@awics.co.uk)

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