

Housing Futures

Your Pocket Guide



9 Would tenants' other rights be protected?

Tenants would keep the main rights that they have now as a Council tenant. They would be protected and included in a new legally binding Tenancy Agreement.

10 Is transfer a new idea?

No. More than one million homes, owned by more than 240 Councils, have transferred. This has resulted in more than £14 billion being invested in homes since the first transfer in 1988. Locally transfer has taken place in Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Sunderland, Redcar and Cleveland, Sedgefield, Chester-le-Street, Derwentside, and Hambleton.

11. How will tenants decide if transfer goes ahead?

Tenants will be given a vote in a ballot planned for 2010. Before the ballot, tenants will be given all the information they need to make an informed choice.

12 What happens if there is a no vote?

If the majority of tenants who vote, vote against the proposal to transfer, the Council would remain as your landlord and Tristar Homes would continue to manage the homes. However, the Council would have less money available to carry out future

improvements and would have to review how it provides the housing service in future. Tenants need to consider the pros and cons of each option before they vote.

For more information on Housing Futures call the Council's freephone information line on: 0800 432 0891 or e-mail housing.futures@stockton.gov.uk

Or call the Independent Tenants' Adviser, Engage Associates, on 01845 537145

Here are the key benefits of transfer:

- ✓ Repair and improvement of homes to a higher standard
- ✓ Affordable rents
- ✓ Key rights and entitlements protected
- ✓ More funding to improve services
- ✓ More funding to improve local communities

1 What is Transfer?

It is the transfer of the ownership and management of all the Council's homes to a not-for-profit housing association. Tristar Homes would become a housing association which means it would own and manage homes, and be run on a "not-for-profit" basis. This new-style Tristar Homes would form a new housing group with existing housing association Housing Hartlepool in order to keep costs down and share good practice.

Transfer can only go ahead if tenants vote in favour in a ballot.

2 Why transfer?

Transfer would unlock funds for the improvement of homes across the Borough – around £600 million over 30 years. Without transfer the Council and Tristar Homes will continue to pay around 30p of each pound of rent collected to the Government, who use this to support other councils across the country. They would also not have the money needed to improve homes and services to the standard tenants have told us they want. However, the new-style Tristar Homes would be governed by a different set of financial rules and would be allowed to keep all rent money and be able to borrow the money needed to reach the standard tenants want to see.

3 What kind of organisation would the new-style Tristar Homes be if transfer goes ahead?

Tristar Homes would become a not-for-profit housing association, which would be registered with the Tenant Services Authority, the Government's regulator of social housing providers.

It would be run by a board of four tenants, four Council nominees and four independent people. The existing staff who currently provide all housing services would continue to do so and work for the new-style Tristar Homes.

4 How would the money secured by transfer be spent?

The money would be spent on:

- Bringing homes up to a consistent standard across the Borough and maintaining this standard – a higher standard than the current 'Decent Homes' standard.
- Improving service delivery.
- Investing more money in services that matter to tenants e.g. tackling anti-social behaviour.
- Investing in local neighbourhoods e.g. carrying out environmental improvement works such as car parking, fencing and lighting.

5 Would tenants have to move?

No. You would not have to move home if transfer went ahead.

6 Would rents go up?

Rents would remain affordable. The Government has guidelines concerning the setting of rents charged by councils and housing associations. The new-style Tristar Homes would also be bound by these guidelines.

The big difference with transfer is that tenants would get more for their money as extra investment would be available for homes and services.

7 Would tenants still be able to claim Housing Benefit?

Yes. Tenants would still be able to make a claim for Housing Benefit. This right will not be affected by the transfer.

8 Would tenants still be able to buy their own home?

Yes. If tenants can buy their home now with the Council, they would still be able to buy their home under what is called the Preserved Right-to-Buy Scheme. They would not lose any discount entitlement by voting 'Yes' to transfer.