



Apsana Begum MP

Member of Parliament for Poplar and Limehouse

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The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

30 September 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

One Housing Merger

I am writing to you regarding the merger of One Housing Group and Riverside Housing Association and the need for greater involvement of tenants in this decision.

Within my constituency, the 4 Estates Forum is an elected Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) which represents the interest of those living in the 2,000 One Housing homes on the Isle of Dogs.

In 2005, ahead of a stock transfer ballot, a promise was made that the homes would be owned and run by a 'board on which residents will be in the majority'.

When One Housing Group were formed in 2008, this resident led structure was abolished and replaced with a board with no elected tenants.

Residents now are being consulted on a further merger with Riverside Housing, but again will be given no democratic say on whether the merger should go ahead.

One Housing Group has established a Joint Customer Advisory Panel (JCAP) from their existing engagement structures to oversee the consultation. The TRA has rightly pointed out to the Social Housing Regulator, that these existing structures are not democratic and instead appointed by One Housing themselves.

When a stock transfer takes place from local authority owned homes to a new landlord, under the Housing (Right to Transfer from a Local Authority Landlord) (England) Regulations 2013, a transfer cannot take place "unless a majority of secure and introductory tenants of the homes in question vote in favour in a ballot."

If the Government agrees that when there is a transfer of local authority properties to a new social landlord that there should be a ballot, why is this not the case for when housing association tenants have a change of landlord imposed upon them?

The Minister for Housing has said that small and medium sized housing associations are 'fundamental' to making the recovery a success.¹ A ballot would ensure that the consultation and proposals for any changes have resident voices at its heart.

Taking into account the above, will you make representations to One Housing Group requesting they hold a ballot of tenants before going ahead with a merger? In addition, could you let me know if the Department or Minister have plans to amend existing legislation so that all registered social housing providers ballot their residents before mergers, transfers or takeovers take place?

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Apsana', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Apsana Begum

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/smaller-housing-associations>

Cc: Christopher Pincher MP, Minister of State for Housing