

Unlocking our Potential:

The Future Shape of Southern Housing Group



Dear Resident,

Over the past few months we have been reviewing the structure of Southern Housing Group, in order to ensure that we are able to deliver the best services we can to our residents at a local level.

We now want to share our plans with you, and to seek your views on what we believe is the best way forward. This document forms our consultation with you, and gives you the information you will need to be able to comment on and influence those plans.

Our plan is to streamline the Group's company structure. We think that there should be one main housing association (called Southern Housing Group Limited), rather than three separate associations: Southern Housing Group Limited, James Butcher Housing Association and South Wight Housing Association. Southern Housing Group Limited would be your landlord if we make these changes. It would have just one board, instead of the three that we have now.

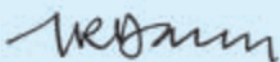
At the same time, we want to build on the level of involvement our residents have in our organisation to make sure that you can influence what we do. Our proposals would mean that residents would have much more opportunity to have a say in how services are delivered, through new ways to become involved.

The plans include regional panels formed entirely of residents which will focus on local services, and which will support the work of our Customer Services Committee, which in turn reports to the Group Board.

Above all, by streamlining we will be able to make our internal processes much simpler and efficient. We will also be able to make savings to put back into improving services and local neighbourhoods, and building new homes.

Before we decide whether to go ahead with the changes, we want to hear your views. Please read this document and tell us what you think about our plans. Your feedback does matter - we want to keep you informed and encourage your input to our future. We will also be sharing your views with the Tenant Services Authority.

We will update you again about this consultation and how we plan to go forward in Open Door magazine later in the year.



Tom Dacey

Chief Executive

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Our consultation with you

This is our formal consultation with you about the future structure of Southern Housing Group. Please read it carefully and let us know what you think. This is your chance to influence our plans. The ways you can contact us to contribute your views or to get more information are set out on page 6.

How does Southern Housing Group work now?

Southern Housing Group is a housing association group made up of several organisations. Formed in 1991, the most established part of the group is called Southern Housing Group Limited. South Wight Housing Association joined the group in 2002 and James Butcher Housing Association joined in 2006. We came together so that we could benefit from each others' experience and create a stronger organisation capable of delivering better services for our residents.

Even though we are all part of the same group, each association is legally a separate organisation with its own properties, staff and board. We work closely together – for example, James Butcher Housing Association and Southern Housing Group manage some of each others' properties, due to their

location. We also share our internal services, such as information technology and human resources, and our teams which manage our budgets and develop new properties.

We work well together, but we think it's too complicated. Quite often one association needs the others' agreement before it can make changes or carry out certain types of work. This involves more paperwork and red tape than there needs to be: this takes time and can slow things down.

What are we thinking of changing?

We're proposing that all three organisations join together and become a single housing association led by a single board. The legal term for this is an amalgamation. The name for the whole organisation would be Southern Housing Group Limited.

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How would the new organisation be run?

Instead of being separate organisations, South Wight Housing Association would become the Isle of Wight Region within the new organisation; James Butcher Housing Association would become the West Region of the new organisation. Their main offices at Newport and Theale would remain open, as regional offices of the newly-formed organisation. There would also be some changes to the boundaries of some of the regions within Southern Housing Group Limited.

At the moment, all three organisations have their own boards. Instead of this there would be only one board for the whole organisation, which would be made up of board members with appropriate skills and expertise (and would include the Group Chief Executive). These board members will also be the only shareholders of the organisation, to safeguard our interests.

To help us keep our local focus, we would also like to create Resident Service Panels for each region of the Group. These panels would have up to 12 members and be made up entirely of local

residents. This is the way we will achieve our resident involvement in the new organisation and the way in which you can continue to be involved in decision making. The panels would be involved in monitoring and shaping arrangements for the delivery of services to residents in the region and helping to plan improvements. They would receive and scrutinise information at a local level. The panels would be supported and serviced by the Group and would be an important part of our governance structure.

The panels would support and inform the Group's Customer Services Committee, and some members of Resident Service Panels would also be members of the Committee. The Customer Services Committee would have responsibility, as it does now, for monitoring and reporting on performance and standards of services for residents in all parts of the organisation, and for advising the Board about these issues.

We think that these arrangements will help to ensure that residents are able to feed into and influence our strategic decisions, and we will review how



effectively they are working 18 months after we set them in place.

What would the amalgamation mean for residents?

The biggest change would be that if your landlord is currently James Butcher Housing Association or South Wight Housing Association it would become Southern Housing Group Limited. That will mean that letters and statements will arrive on a Southern Housing Group letterhead, rather than a South Wight HA or James Butcher HA one.

But it won't alter anything else:

- your tenancy conditions and rights would not change
- it won't affect your rent, and the basis for future rent changes will not be affected as a result of this proposal
- if you are a leaseholder, it won't affect your lease
- local services would still be provided in most areas by the people who provide it now
- we would keep our existing offices open
- we would keep existing contracts with our partners (including those for maintenance work).

That is not to say that things won't change over time, but that would always be the case whether we joined together or not. We're always looking at ways to provide better services and value for money, but if there are any major changes in the future we will consult you first. The important thing to remember is that the amalgamation itself will not affect the way your services are delivered.

If nothing's really changing, where is the benefit?

Things would change behind the scenes. We would be able to reduce significantly the paperwork and red tape that we have at the moment, which will help us to make decisions more quickly. Our staff wouldn't have to go to so many meetings about the same thing, so they would have more time to focus on delivering and improving our services. Another benefit would be that we would be able to streamline the purchasing of services and supplies for the whole organisation to get better value for money – and use the savings to fund new and better services.

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Tell us what you think

We would also become even stronger financially, which means that we would be able to access more money to invest in residents' homes and neighbourhoods and build more affordable homes for people in need.

As we explained above, we would be able to improve the way we involve our residents in monitoring and improving delivery of local services.

It would also make our residents and staff part of one organisation, which means we can share fully our resources, knowledge and experience. In some instances this will mean that we will be able to expand existing services, to which access is currently limited, to all parts of the Group – for example, our community development work, which looks beyond the housing needs of residents, to improve the quality of people's lives by providing a wide range of support (including grants) to organisations, residents' groups and individual residents.

Most importantly, we think our new structure will help us to focus on delivering excellent services to our residents now and in the future.

This proposal is supported by each of the boards of Southern Housing Group Limited, James Butcher Housing Association and South Wight Housing Association – but we want to know what you think about us joining together. We won't make a decision until the boards of the three associations (all of which include residents), have considered your views from this consultation.

We hope that you will complete the consultation form enclosed with this leaflet and sent it back to us (you can add extra pages of comments if you wish). Please also use this form to ask any questions you might have.

Please send it back to us at the following address by 21 May 2010. Postage is paid, so you don't need a stamp.

**Unlocking our Potential Consultation
Southern Housing Group
Freepost KE 8547
59-61 Clerkenwell Road
London EC1M 5LA**

You can also email us at **consultation@shgroup.org.uk** or fill in the questionnaire online at **www.shgroup.org.uk/consultation**



If you would like to speak to someone about this, you can call **0300 303 1684***, and our staff will be happy to answer your questions or can arrange for you to speak to someone locally. You can also speak to our staff at your regional office or sheltered or supported scheme.

Any of our staff will be happy to help you. They may not be able to answer your questions straight away, but they will find out the answers and come back to you.

The results of this consultation will be reported back to you in future editions of Open Door.

Remember: to be able to consider your views we need to hear from you by 21 May 2010.

*0300 numbers cost the same to call as standard 01 and 02 numbers, even from a mobile phone. They are often part of the inclusive call minutes and discount schemes offered by mobile and land line providers.

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Some questions answered

Will it make a difference to my rent and how I pay it?

No. Our plans will not affect your rent and how you pay it. If they are accepted, you will make your payments the same way you normally do.

Will the amount of rent I pay change?

No, not because of the amalgamation. Our plans won't affect the way in which your rent is calculated. There is a Government-set target for housing association rents, which all housing associations must follow.

What will my landlord be called?

Southern Housing Group Limited. We will be a charitable housing association and a non-profit making Industrial and Provident Society that does not pay any dividends to its shareholding members.

The Tenant Services Authority would oversee these changes and continue to regulate us.

Does the amalgamation mean that Southern Housing Group Limited is taking over James Butcher and South Wight Housing Associations?

No. Although Southern Housing Group Limited is the biggest association in the Group, the amalgamation is a coming together of all three associations to create a stronger and more efficient organisation. This would be called Southern Housing Group Limited, and all three associations would contribute to creating the new association.

What would the regions in the new organisation be called?

- Isle of Wight Region
- South Region
- West Region
- London Region
- Thames Gateway Region

What will happen to my tenancy or lease?

The conditions of your tenancy (or lease for leaseholders) would not change, but Southern Housing Group Limited would be the name of your landlord. We would not have to issue new tenancy agreements, but we would send you a formal notice giving you general landlord details following the amalgamation.



Your rights and responsibilities as a tenant or leaseholder would not change.

It is also important to note that any statutory rights, such as 'right to buy' and 'right to succeed' are also unaffected.

Will my services be affected?

Our plans won't make any changes to your local services. They will just help us to be more efficient behind the scenes.

Will there be any new services for residents?

We plan to extend the work of our community development team to cover all parts of the new organisation.

We will also continue to look at ways that we can improve our existing services to residents in all parts of the organisation.

Will you keep existing offices open?

Yes. We have no plans to close any of our offices.

Would staff be affected?

Most staff will be unaffected. The people who work with you now will probably

stay the same, but some might have a different internal reporting structure following the amalgamation.

Who will manage the amalgamated organisation?

The new organisation would have a single board which would oversee the work of the Group.

We also plan to create Resident Service Panels, which will be locally-based committees made up of residents focused on monitoring regional services. They will support and inform our Group-wide Customer Services Committee, which reports to the Board.

Who would be the shareholders of the new organisation?

The board members of Southern Housing Group Limited would be the shareholders of the new organisation.

How do I know if this legally is the right thing to do?

The boards within the Group have taken the advice of independent consultants to help them consider the pros and cons of amalgamation, and we have also taken legal advice to make sure that our

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plans are within the law and are being properly handled. Our proposals will also be considered and approved by the Tenant Services Authority, the government agency which oversees the work of housing associations.

What happens next?

This is the timetable that we plan to follow:

- April - May 2010: resident consultation
- June 2010: feedback from this consultation considered by each board
- June - July 2010: shareholders' meetings

If the plans are agreed:

- August 2010: We will make an official application to the Tenant Services Authority, with the business case for this proposal
- August 2010 onwards: feedback to residents
- October 2010: The new board and the amalgamated organisation would be in place





How can I find out more?

If you want more information, please tell us what you need to know by returning the 'What do you think?' form enclosed, or alternatively contact us in any of the ways previously outline.

If you do need more information, please let us know as soon as you can, so you still have time to let us know your final thoughts before **21 May 2010**.

This leaflet contains important information about possible changes to your landlord.
If you would like it in another language or format please call the Service Centre.

Arabic

يحتوي هذا المنشور على معلومات هامة حول التغييرات المحتملة لمالك العقار الخاص بك. إذا أردت الحصول عليه بلغة أخرى أو بتنسيق آخر يرجى الاتصال بمركز الخدمة على رقم 0300 303 1771.

Bengali

এই লিফলেটের মধ্যে আপনার ল্যান্ডলর্ড-এর সম্ভাব্য পরিবর্তন সম্পর্কে জরুরী তথ্য রয়েছে। আপনি যদি এটি অন্য কোন ভাষায় বা ফরম্যাটে পেতে চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে সার্ভিস সেন্টার-এ 0300 303 1682 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

French

Cette brochure contient des informations importantes sur les changements possibles de propriétaire vous concernant. Si vous souhaitez l'obtenir dans une autre langue ou un autre format, veuillez contacter le Centre de Services au 0300 303 1771.

Somali

Macluumaad-sidahan waxaa ku jira macluumaad muhiim ah oo ku saabsan isbedelo macquul ah ee kireeyahaaga. Haddii aad ku doonayso luuqad kale ama qaab qoraal kale fadlan wac Xarunta Adeegga ee 0300 303 1771.

Spanish

Este folleto contiene información importante sobre posibles cambios en su arrendador. Si desea recibir esta información en otro idioma o formato, llame al Centro de servicios en el 0300 303 1771.

Turkish

Bu broşür, ev sahibinizle ilgili muhtemel değişiklikler hakkında önemli bilgiler içermektedir. Eğer bu broşürün başka bir dile çevrilmiş ya da farklı bir formatta bir kopyasını isterseniz lütfen 0300 303 1683 numaralı telefondan Hizmet Merkezini arayın.

Contact us

Phone	0300 303 1684, Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm
Website	www.shgroup.org.uk/consultation
Email	consultation@shgroup.org.uk
Write to	Unlocking our Potential Consultation, Southern Housing Group, Freepost KE 8547, 59-61 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1M 5LA
In person	Speak to a member of staff at a scheme or regional office

Text Relay If you have a textphone, you can contact us using the national Text Relay service. To use the Text Relay service, prefix the telephone number you are a calling with:

- 18001 if you are a text user
- 18002 if you are a hearing user

