

# TMO MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TENANT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS

## TMOs and the Big Society

Are we in  
or out?



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE >>



#### TMO Grants in Doubt

TEP Programme reviewed.  
Page 3



#### Campaign for Community Ownership

Jonathan Rosenberg reports.  
Page 11



#### STATUS Symbols

Satisfaction surveys put TMOs  
in the lead. Page 9



## SECURE TENANTS MEAN STABLE COMMUNITIES

The Government has announced plans to introduce new forms of fixed-term tenancies, where future tenants would pay up to 80 per cent of the market rent in what the Housing Minister calls 'the most radical shake-up of housing since the war'.

So again a government is floating proposals to reduce or remove the security of tenure enjoyed by tenants of councils and housing associations. Once again the NFTMO will actively oppose any move to do so. It is an offensive suggestion that, because we are tenants, we should be forced to move out of our homes after a certain number of years or because we have got ourselves a decently paid job.

This promises to undermine all the hard work that TMOs and others do to create stable and settled communities. We call for a rethink by those in Government who are promoting this idea. Recently the NFTMO was a signatory to a letter sent to the Prime Minister by a group of national tenants' organisations. The letter included the following paragraph;

"Tenants and landlords have been working for years to tackle the stigma of social housing - this proposal will enshrine it. We are working to build stable long term self-supporting communities in social housing - a primary aim of the Coalition Government's Big Society. But this proposal sends a message that social housing tenants are not part of the Big Society - there is no point in them participating in community activity - because their status will only be temporary.

This will be an issue that will unite tenants' organisations around the country.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## TMO LAUNCHES COMMUNITY LIBRARY

3 years of determined work by Co-op members at Carrbrook TMC led to the opening in August of Carrbrook Community Library and gardens; 7000 books and a small computer suite within a landscaped setting accessible to all residents in the Carrbrook neighbourhood of Stalybridge. The library is run by local volunteers.

The library was opened by the Deputy Mayor of Tameside and the event was attended by representatives of Mosscares RSL, Tameside Council, Tameside Building Services, Jackson Lloyd Builders, TRN training who provided young people working voluntarily on worthwhile community projects, and local people who have worked together to create a superb literacy facility in an area where none was provided.

Pictured with the Deputy Mayor are Co-op members Ann Daniel and Terry Drabble. A week



after the opening Terry, who had driven the work forward with single-minded zeal, had successful open heart surgery at Manchester's regional Cardiothoracic Unit!

Another reminder that tenant co-op's are the Big Society in action!

## WORLD BOXING CHAMP HAYE OPENS TMO PLAY AREA

Earlier this year, Leathermarket JMB in South London were proud to have the world Heavy Weight boxing champion, David Haye, to open a new toddlers play area on their estate. The opening attracted about 200 people.

The JMB manages housing in Southwark and had asked graphic design students from the London Communication College to look at a drab area of grass between two tower blocks. JMB Manager Andy Bates explained "We wanted to test the idea that if we come up with innovative designs, involving residents, we can reduce anti-social behaviour."

"The students designed a natural toddlers play area. When we found that the cost of paying a contractor was far above our budget, the students, May Safwat, Rick Knowles and Diego Ulrich, decided to get their hands dirty and built it themselves. With technical advice from the JMB repairs manager and practical help, from our repair staff and gardeners."



"Local residents also came out on a Saturday morning to do planting. As well as getting their hands dirty, they also got their hands cold, working through the cold snap, just before the big freeze!"

David Haye grew up in one of the Leathermarket blocks. So the Southwark TMO invited him to open the project and he was happy to help and to stay for an hour signing photographs.



## NATIONAL TENANTS VOICE - WHAT NOW?

Consultations are taking place about how things can move forward following the Housing Minister's decision to withdraw government funding from the newly established National Tenants Voice (NTV). The decision came only weeks after the 50 strong tenants council and the NTV Board were established.

The NFTMO was one of the national tenants' organisations that had worked hard for several years to get the NTV off the ground. After the news that the NTV was to be scrapped NFTMO Chair Terry Edis said "It is important that tenants remain unified after this set back. The National Tenant Organisations will

continue to work with the Coalition government to highlight the needs of tenants and we more than ever need to work together to represent tenants' interests. The eyes of the sector are now on the government, and we will be looking for them to demonstrate how they are committed to tenants in England."

The government is expected to make a grant available for the national tenants organisations and members of the NTV council to explore options for ensuring the continuation of the NTV Council in some form. A condition of grant for the project, which has been called 'New Dawn', is that any proposed way forward must not involve more government funding.

## UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR GRANTS TO HELP NEW TMOs

A review has been taking place of the grant regime that helps fund options studies and then feasibility and development programmes for tenants groups wanting to set up new TMOs. Tenant Empowerment Programme (TEP) grants have also funded the national tenant training programmes (through InStep and Trafford Hall), national tenants organisations, tenant information services and other activities such as Tenant Led Stock Option studies. In 2009-10 the budget was just over £2million of which over one-third went to tenant management projects.

The review, carried out by civil servants in Communities and Local Government and by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), took place in the context of the new Government's Big Society agenda and, of course, the public

expenditure cuts. Tenants' groups who are currently receiving TEP grants have been told that there is no guarantee of grant after March 2011 and have been encouraged to make as much progress as possible by that date. The NFTMO response to the Review, which can be read at [www.nftmo.com](http://www.nftmo.com), argued that the TEP grants are essential but that TMOs could be developed with much lower grants if the landlord is supportive and the group is resourceful.

In a further money saving measure, the TSA are now managing the Right to Manage Approved Assessor service 'in house'. Consultants Grant Thornton had managed the service for two years from its inception in October 2008. The TSA themselves are due to go soon after the cull of QUANGOs.

## PETRA TMO PROJECT SHORTLISTED FOR £10,000 FUTURE FRIENDLY AWARD



Congratulations to the Parkhill Estate Tenants' and Residents' Association (PETRA) TMO for being shortlisted for the 2010 Future Friendly awards! PETRA Chair, Mike Davis is pictured.

An organisation called LIVLIG has been working with PETRA over the last few months to make their housing estate in East London more sustainable. Planned projects include installing energy saving kits in the flats and using the roof spaces on the tower blocks for generating green electricity, growing food and beekeeping.

## LONDON COUNCIL CONCEDES DEFEAT IN TMO ALLOWANCES DISPUTE

Two South London TMOs, Thorlands HMS and Angell Town EMB, have won a long running dispute with Lambeth Council about cuts in allowances. In June the Council conceded, just days before an arbitration hearing, and agreed to pay the disputed allowances in full and backdated to the beginning of the dispute in 2007.

Thorlands chair John Frankland said "The committees of the two TMOs were determined to see this challenge through and did not waiver. The Council had acted without regard to the Right to Manage legislation and behaved as if might was right. Smaller TMOs were forced to settle for less in order to avoid immediate insolvency. Lambeth is not the only landlord squeezing its TMOs out of existence. TMOs elsewhere have suffered the same mistreatment and some have already been forced out of business or face imminent closure."

# THE BIG SOCIETY AND TMOS

Since the Coalition Government came into power with a declared ambition to promote the 'Big Society' there has been plenty of speculation about what exactly it means in practice. Not surprisingly many sectors have been quick to declare themselves to be key to the Big Society in order to make their case for continuing government support and to avoid the worst impact of spending cuts.

Some critics say the Big Society is a policy that aims to get volunteers to fill gaps in services that are created by cuts in public expenditure. Others argue that the Big Society is just giving a new name to community and voluntary work that has been going on for generations. The Prime Minister describes the Big Society as 'his great passion' and he chose a July visit to Liverpool as his opportunity to explain what he means and how the government can help to build up a Big Society.

So what might be the impact, if any, of the Big Society agenda on existing and future Tenant Management Organisations? Does it provide any cause for optimism amongst the bleak prospects and gloomy forecasts for the public housing sector?

Well, why not take the Prime Minister's Big Society speech as a reference and ask ourselves two questions:

- Do TMOs fit David Cameron's description and vision of the Big Society?
- If so, what support might the government provide to enable TMOs to help fulfil that vision?

## DO TMOS FIT THE CAMERON VISION?

In Liverpool Prime Minister Cameron said "The Big Society is about a huge culture change where people, in their everyday lives, in their homes, in their neighbourhoods and in their workplace don't always turn to officials, local authorities or central government for answers to the problems they face but instead feel both free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities."

Earlier the Coalition government's policy announcements around the Big Society included the following statements:

"We will give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services."

"We will train a new generation of community organisers and support the creation of neighbourhood groups across the UK, especially in the most deprived areas."

"We will take a range of measures to encourage volunteering and involvement in social action."

"We will support the creation and expansion of mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises, and support these groups to have much greater involvement in the running of public services."

Tenant Management Organisations would seem to tick all the boxes. Indeed, after hearing his Liverpool speech NFTMO Chair Terry Edis wrote to the Prime Minister saying "Many people find it hard to imagine why or how community volunteers might get directly involved in providing public services in their own neighbourhoods. Yet I know why and I know how. I would love you to come and visit us at WATMOS Community Homes where eight TMOs are managing mainly ex council housing. I think you will be encouraged by what you see and it may help other people to get a clearer picture of what the 'Big Society' might mean in very real terms"

Of course, all of the coalition government policy initiatives are conditional on them being affordable within the much reduced levels of public expenditure. Although David Cameron denies that the Big

Society idea is about cutting costs, the assumption is clearly that local control and community action will run services more cost effectively. Most TMOs tick this box too, there is still plenty of evidence of TMOs providing better value for money than their landlord. A bigger issue here may be the cost of developing new TMOs. Central Government has been providing the lion's share of funding to new groups through the Tenant Empowerment Programme (TEP) grants.

So TMOs seem to fit the Big Society vision like the proverbial glove. Local? Yes. Led by community volunteers? Yes. Managing public services? Of course. People taking responsibility for their own lives? Certainly. Providing services more cost effectively? In most cases yes.

## WHAT SUPPORT CAN TMO'S EXPECT TO HELP BUILD THE NEW SOCIETY?

Working on the basis that TMOs are a good example of the Big Society in action we then move on to the practical question as to what difference, if any, that will make to our sector. Let's go back to David Cameron's speech in Liverpool and what he said about government action to help build the Big Society. He proposed a new approach to government, saying "The rule of this government should be this: If it unleashes community engagement – we should do it. If it crushes it – we shouldn't." The Prime Minister went on to set out several strands of the Big Society agenda. Firstly he said the government must "foster and support a new culture of voluntarism, philanthropy, social action." Secondly, he said "We've got to get rid of the centralised bureaucracy... and open up public services to new providers like charities, social enterprises and private companies". Thirdly the PM turned to community empowerment saying "We need to create communities with oomph – neighbourhoods who are in charge of their own destiny, who feel if they club together and get involved they can shape the world around them"



Photo: Peter Macdiarmid / Getty Images News / Getty Images

Mr. Cameron finished his speech with this offer. "I want other forward-thinking, entrepreneurial, community-minded people and neighbourhoods in our country to come forward and ask for the same freedoms, the same support too. If you've got an idea to make life better, if you want to improve your local area, don't just think about it – tell us what you want to do and we will try and give you the tools to make this happen."

So how can the Prime Minister help existing and potential TMOs to fulfill his vision for the Big Society? What tools are required?

Many people in existing TMOs might say that the most important thing the new government can do is to support the social housing sector and believe in its potential as a tenure of choice. Most neighbourhoods managed by TMOs will be deeply affected by cuts in benefits and

proposed changes to security of tenure could undermine the work that TMO volunteers are doing to create a stable and settled community. Mr. Cameron can help the thousands of TMO and Co-op volunteers by not making their job harder than it already is.

Experience tells us that the transfer of power from large bureaucracies to local people does not happen simply because the government says it should. The Prime Minister can help local volunteers by making sure that large landlords don't put unnecessary obstacles in the way of tenants seeking more control over their housing. It had been hoped that regulation by the doomed Tenant Services Authority (TSA) would do that particular job. If the government chooses to give more power and autonomy to local councils it does not follow that they will pass that power on to local people. Ever larger and more powerful landlords with poorer and

**SO WHAT MIGHT BE THE IMPACT, IF ANY, OF THE BIG SOCIETY AGENDA ON EXISTING AND FUTURE TENANT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS? DOES IT PROVIDE ANY CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM AMONGST THE BLEAK PROSPECTS AND GLOOMY FORECASTS FOR THE PUBLIC HOUSING SECTOR?**



less secure tenants is not a recipe for empowerment and would be a travesty of the Big Society vision.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

The Coalition policies acknowledge that the Big Society idea depends on a capacity building programme of training and support – to create a larger and more able pool of community volunteers. This would mean very significant levels of public expenditure have to be invested up front in order to gain the longer term benefits envisaged for the Big Society.

Since 1994 the TMO sector has been supported by Tenant Empowerment Programme (TEP) grants for the training and development of new TMOs. For several years this grant regime has not been providing value for money in terms of new TMOs established per pound of grant invested. This autumn the TEP grant regime has been under review and the NFTMO has argued that the capacity building process could and should be much less expensive, but this will depend on support and co-operation from more landlords, not just the excellent minority.

So, some of the tools that Mr. Cameron can offer are some continuing grant, albeit at lower levels, and some sticks and carrots to encourage landlord co-operation. At the time of writing the outcome of the TEP review has not been announced. In any event some grant support will



be essential. If it is not from the TEP programme then will the Big Society bank support TMO set up costs?

Returning to the Prime Minister's Liverpool speech, he said "The potential problem is that you can lock smaller organisations out, because they don't have access to start-up capital. So government has a crucial role to play in bridging the gap – and indeed, more widely, in connecting private capital to investment in social projects. We have already said we will create a Big Society Bank to help finance social enterprises, charities and voluntary groups

through intermediaries. It will – over time – make available hundreds of millions of pounds of new finance to some of our most dynamic social organisations."

There can be no doubt that Tenant Management Organisations exemplify much of what the Big Society vision seems to hold up as the way forward. TMOs have their strengths and weaknesses, their ups and downs, but by and large they work and have worked for many years. It would be bizarre if this government champions the Big Society but allows the TMO Sector to wither away through lack of support.

# NFTMO WORKING ON NEW BUSINESS PLAN – YOUR HELP NEEDED!



NFTMO Co-ordinator Trevor Bell writes;

There has been a long gap since the last issue of the TMO Magazine was published in January. The housing world looks very different now! We have a new government that quickly axed the National Tenants Voice, the Tenant Services Authority and the Audit Commission. Public expenditure cuts dominate the agenda.

In May the new government put a freeze on all grant offers under the Tenant Empowerment Programme. This meant that the NFTMO, and many other groups, were suddenly faced with the suspension and possible loss of grant that had been expected for this year. Months passed before this year's TEP budget was released, including welcome grant for the NFTMO. But the NFTMO's cash reserves had got dangerously low - hence the delayed publication of this magazine.

With the future of the TEP Grant programme very uncertain the NFTMO is aiming to develop a 'business model' that will be less dependent on government grant. The NFTMO do not get 'core' grant but TEP does help fund a number of our activities. NFTMO overheads are very low. The Federation has no office premises and only one part-time employee and success depends on huge amounts of voluntary work by executive committee members. It still cost's around £60,000 a year to fund our main core activities

and services. Even after the increase agreed at the AGM in June, membership fees contribute less than one third of those costs.

Our challenge is to find new ways to fund the Federation's work at a time when many organisations in the voluntary sector are also adjusting to cuts in grants from central and local government. The Tenant Services Authority has provided a grant for us to work up a new business plan.

Ideas we are exploring include:-

- sponsorship and advertising for our website, magazine and events;
- setting up a charitable 'arm' of the Federation to raise funds to support our education and training work with unfunded tenants' groups in areas of need;
- an annual fundraising awards event and yearbook;
- charges for some 'consultancy' services;
- exploring other potential funders and grant regimes, particularly those that will be targeted at the Big Society agenda.

The NFTMO executive committee has been encouraged by the support received from members. We need more of your ideas and views. We will be consulting widely over the next few months but meanwhile if you have any ideas please do contact us at [contact@nftmo.com](mailto:contact@nftmo.com).

## IS THE WRITING ON THE WALL FOR TMOs?

BY TOM HOPKINS – MANAGING DIRECTOR, OPEN COMMUNITIES

The Government's vision is to give local neighbourhoods and communities a real say in decision making, taking away the powers of government and placing the trust in the community to 'get it right first time' with a 'can do' approach expected from the third sector throughout the UK.

However the Government has already announced big cuts in spending on social housing. Of particular interest for us within the TMO sector are the Governments plans around the Tenant Empowerment Programme (TEP)

TEP grants that support the development of TMOs are also under threat. The sector must prepare for changes in the way that new TMOs are developed. Long standing levels of grant to develop TMOs may be coming to an end. TMO's may be a prime example of the Big Society in action but that doesn't mean that grants will be protected. The tenant management movement will need to work harder to obtain alternative funding to match or replace the traditional forms of funding if it is to continue.

Here at Open Communities we are looking at different approaches to develop TMOs quicker, cheaper and with alternative sources of funding for both developing and existing TMOs. The future will be challenging, but who says that tenants aren't up for a challenge!

If anyone wants to know more about Open Communities research into alternative sources of funding for TMOs please call FREPHONE 0800 073 1051 or email [enquiries@opencommunities.org](mailto:enquiries@opencommunities.org).

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# TMO MEMBERS HEALTH CHECK QUIZ NO 3

In the latest in our series of exercises to help you check out the governance of your TMO we turn to questions about how well the TMO represents and involves the community. This does not happen automatically just because an organisation is a TMO. It needs to be planned and worked at. How well is your TMO doing? Do you know what is going on? Answer these questions honestly, on your own. Rate each response between 1 to 10 as indicated and then add up your scores. Finally go the back page to see what your total score might tell you.

	strongly disagree ..... neither agree nor disagree ..... strongly agree									
I am aware of the make-up of our community and have thought about how we could make our membership base more representative.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I actively encourage estate residents to become involved in the TMO.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I have considered the needs of under-represented groups and how they can become more involved.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am aware of the various communication needs on the estate and how this impacts on the work of the TMO.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I talk to estate residents about issues on the estate and the work of the TMO.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am aware of how satisfied residents are with the TMO's services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I feel that we consult residents appropriately on issues affecting their homes and the estate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Other TMO member quizzes, like this one, but about being well run, managing finances, good conduct, being a good employer, monitoring performance and training – are all available at [www.nftmo.com](http://www.nftmo.com). If your TMO is interested in working towards the NFTMO Good Governance Kite Mark then contact the NFTMO at [contact@nftmo.com](mailto:contact@nftmo.com)

## TMO PHOTO SCRAPBOOK



Childwall Valley Estate Management Board in Liverpool chalked up 10 years of successful tenant led management this year. The TMO Members and staff are pictured preparing for a photo shoot during the birthday celebrations.



The NFTMO Good Governance Kite Mark was recently awarded to Springfield Horseshoe Co-op in Wolverhampton. Pictured are Co-op members and staff with NFTMO Chair Terry Edis following the presentation of the Award in August

# TENANTS IN TMO MANAGED PROPERTIES ARE MORE SATISFIED – IT'S OFFICIAL!

Detailed tenant satisfaction surveys in London and the West Midlands have provided more evidence of the difference that TMOs can make. The STATUS surveys, that stands for Standardised Tenant Satisfaction Survey, are acknowledged in the housing sector as reliable indicators of comparative satisfaction levels.

### TMOs Lead in Southwark

In London, Southwark Council recently conducted a STATUS survey of tenants in properties managed by the 14 TMOs in the Borough. It revealed some impressive results. Two years ago the Council conducted a survey of its own tenants and a satisfaction level of 62% was achieved. By comparison the recent survey revealed a satisfaction rate of 77% for tenants in TMO managed homes.

In addition:-;

- 80% of TMO tenants were satisfied with the opportunities to make contact with the TMO (The Council rating was 59%),
- 74% with the way the TMO deals with repairs (62%),
- 74% with the overall quality of their home (62%); and

- 76% with the neighbourhood as a place to live (67%).

TMOs also scored much higher satisfaction rates when tenants were asked about grounds maintenance and cleaning services.

TMO tenants appeared to consider there to be less of a problem than their council managed counterparts when asked about problems with litter, vandalism and graffiti, drug dealing and other crime. TMO tenants were generally more satisfied with the outcome of complaints about anti-social behaviour.

For tenants who had made recent contact 82% found it easy to contact the right person in their TMO compared to 47% of Southwark tenants. 71% were satisfied with the final outcome (51% with the Council).

### WATMOS in Top 5%

WATMOS Community Homes recent STATUS Survey provided even more impressive results. WATMOS is a tenant-led registered provider whose front line services are delivered by eight local TMOs in Walsall. The organisations success

shines through with the survey results placing its performance in the top 5 per cent nationally. 92% satisfaction with the overall service, 91% satisfaction with repairs and maintenance and 94% with the quality of their homes are just a few of the numbers that demonstrate how well the TMO's are performing.

WATMOS Chief Executive Ursula Barrington said 'These results really demonstrate how well Tenant Management works. Our TMO's are connected to their residents on a daily basis and they are able to deliver services that meet the evolving needs of their communities'.

And in nearby Wolverhampton, the Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board revealed that the recent STATUS Survey recorded an overall satisfaction level of 87% compared with 81% for the Council as a whole. The EMB satisfaction rate bettered the Council on almost every indicator. For example, satisfaction levels with the repairs service were 87% compared with 79% with the Council.



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# STAY ON THE BALL! TENANT TRAINING DIARY



NOV 2010 – FEB 2011

## EVENTS LIKELY TO BE OF INTEREST TO TMOS.

Date	Title	Location	Trainer
2 Nov 10	Working with Contractors	Northampton	InStep
3 Nov 10	Allocations and Lettings	Peterborough	InStep
4 Nov 10	Standards and Local Offers	Southampton	InStep
9 Nov 10	Making Your Point	London	TPAS
10 Nov 10	Value For Money	Birmingham	TPAS
15-17 Nov 10	Avoiding Burnout	Chester	Trafford Hall
16 Nov 10	Essential Committee Skills	Bath	InStep
16 Nov 10	Tenant Involvement Repairs	Cambridge	InStep
17 Nov 10	Being a Committee Secretary	Preston	InStep
23 Nov 10	Anti Social Behaviour Workshop	Durham	InStep
25 Nov 10	Writing and Publicity Skills	Wolverhampton	InStep
30 Nov 10	Being a Tenant Chair	Birmingham	InStep
2 Dec 10	Standards and Local Offers	Wolverhampton	InStep
13 Jan 11	Allocations and Lettings	Basingstoke	InStep
17-18 Jan 11	Women as Heroes	Chester	Trafford Hall
18 Jan 11	Anti Social Behaviour Workshop	London	InStep
18 Jan 11	Start Making Sense (Monitoring)	Norwich	TPAS
20 Jan 11	Working with Contractors	Leeds	InStep
25 Jan 11	Essential Committee Skills	Manchester	InStep
28 Jan 11	Being a Tenant Chair	Bristol	InStep
28 Jan 11	Start Making Sense (Monitoring)	Exeter	TPAS
1 Feb 11	Being a Tenant Chair	Sheffield	InStep
3 Feb 11	Anti Social Behaviour Workshop	Colchester	InStep
9 Feb 11	Making Your Point	Birmingham	TPAS
10 Feb 11	Resident Involvement Strategies	Coventry	InStep
15 Feb 11	Tenant Involvement in Repairs	Bournemouth	InStep
15-16 Feb 11	Keeping It Legal	Chester	Trafford Hall
17 Feb 11	Scrutiny Groups	Peterborough	InStep

### CONTACTS FOR FURTHER DETAILS AND BOOKINGS:-

**InStep** Tel: 0500 844 111 • Website: [www.instepservices.co.uk](http://www.instepservices.co.uk)

**TPAS** Tel: 0161 868 3520 • Website: [www.tpas.org.uk](http://www.tpas.org.uk)

**Trafford Hall** Tel: 01244 300246 • Website: [www.traffordhall.com](http://www.traffordhall.com)



# SECTION 34A AND THE BIG SOCIETY

## CONSULTANT AND CAMPAIGNER JONATHAN ROSENBERG EXPLAINS

Under the Big Society banner Prime Minister David Cameron says he's keen to devolve power to the people, has set up the Conservative Co-operative movement, and supports the transfer of public assets and revenue streams to mutuals and co-ops.

Cameron's favourite academic, Phillip Blond, who runs his own think-tank Respublica, is even more radical. He calls for asset transfer to spread wealth among poorer communities as part of a programme for mass mutualisation.

Following this through, it seems both logical and obvious that the Big Society approach would be to mutualise social housing. If so, the Housing Minister should:

- Encourage housing associations and local authorities to ask their residents whether they want to take over their homes, and where they do, to support the mutualisation of social housing;
- Conclude the reform of the Housing Revenue Account so as to facilitate viable stock transfers to mutual associations, co-ops and community land trusts;
- Restore and maintain support for resident groups interested in tenant-led stock transfers;
- Make the regulations for S34A of the 1985 Housing Act (as amended), which would require a local authority to co-operate with a proposal from a tenant group to transfer ownership of their homes to a landlord of their choice.

Last year, residents of the West Kensington and Gibbs Green Estates in west London took offence at being labelled a Ghetto by their local authority landlord, and at being earmarked for sale and demolition. In December they served the Council with a notice under S34A proposing the transfer of their estates to a

resident-controlled community landlord. At the same time they wrote to the Secretary of State, inviting him to make the regulations needed to facilitate the process envisaged by the Act.

The post election Coalition Government promotes localism and the Big Society. Ministers have said that devolution must go beyond local authorities to the neighbourhood level, recognising, as did Housing Minister Grant Shapps MP, that: "even the local tier of government sometimes struggles to transfer control to local communities".

So, the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP, should not have been surprised when he was invited by the solicitors acting for West Kensington and Gibbs Green to make the S34A regulations:

"This is one of several cases around the country where residents want to be empowered to take ownership of their estates so they can be responsible and free to help themselves, and transform their lives and environment according to their needs and priorities.

The previous government introduced S34A to ensure that local authorities cannot block or unnecessarily impede the wishes of tenants to transfer their estates. We believe this piece of legislation is a ready-made mechanism for implementing the Big Society in council-owned neighbourhoods."

Civil servants said they were consulting with the new Housing Minister. Hopefully, he will listen to the groups whose efforts led to S34A being enacted, and help tenants on estates where the council is stopping them from taking over their homes.

If the Government is to make real its rhetoric about devolving power to the people through asset transfer, it should proceed to make the regulations for S34A of the 1985 Housing Act, so empowering communities on council estates to play their part in the Big Society.

# NFTMO TO RECALL TRANSFER FORUM

Until 2009 the NFTMO convened a regular meeting of a 'Community Led Transfer Forum' to bring together tenants groups that were contemplating or implementing a tenant led stock transfer – linking them up with organisations that had already completed the process and had created their own tenant controlled Registered Social Landlord. Several, but not all, groups looking at a tenant led transfer were TMOs. There is a natural logic for some TMOs, having made a success of management, to look at community ownership as a future option.

A major focus for the forum was a campaign to address the problem of local authorities who refused to co-operate with tenant led transfer initiatives, even though government policy had been to encourage the idea. Excellent progress was made on that front and in 2008 Parliament passed legislation giving the Secretary of State the power to make regulations requiring councils to co-operate.

Civil servants started consulting on the details of the proposed regulations but the regulations failed to appear in 2009 and were then put on ice pending the general election. The disappointing delay was partly explained by the last government reassessing its transfer policy in the light of the Housing Revenue Account review.

The NFTMO is now proposing to call a meeting of the Community Led Transfer Forum to review progress of projects around the country and to give civil servants the opportunity to update us on the prospects of the regulations being published. If you would like to be invited to that Forum meeting please let the NFTMO know at [contact@nftmo.com](mailto:contact@nftmo.com).

## ONE-TO-ONE MEET MARK ELLIS BA (HONS)

**Q. Mark, how long have you lived on the Childwall Valley estate in Liverpool and how did you get involved in the Estate Management Board?**

A. I have lived on the Estate for 50 years. Last year I had the great honour of being invited onto the EMB as an observer. Since graduating from University and being disabled this has given me the opportunity to serve my Community.

**Q. Have you enjoyed being involved?**

A. Yes. In joining the team I have made many friends. I would like to thank the committee for having the confidence to take me on board with them. I feel that I have much to offer concerning the disabled in the community. In the short time I have been with the team I have gained a lot of confidence and it has broadened my horizons.

**Q. Has the EMB improved the estate?**

A. Over the years I have seen many changes in the Estate and I am quite confident there will be many more changes for the benefit of the community. I hope that one day I will be able to emulate the good work of the EMB Board. As volunteers they work very hard in their endeavour to improve the local environment.

**Q. Your first NFTMO conference was this summer?**

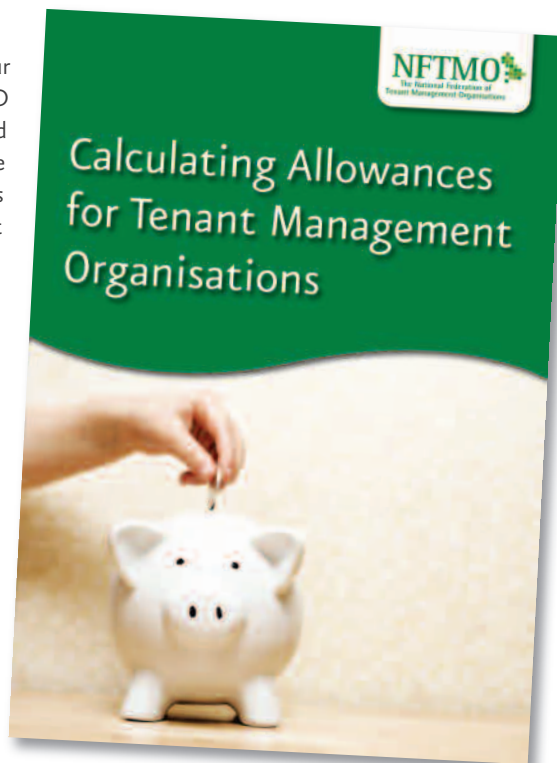
A. Yes. I had the good fortune to attend the Annual Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon in June of this year. I found this very interesting and worthwhile. I learnt a great deal from the week-end and so I would like to take this opportunity to thank the EMB for inviting me along with them. Thank you all.

# CALCULATING ALLOWANCES ON SITE TRAINING FOR YOUR TMO! BOOK NOW!

Earlier this year the NFTMO published our new Guidance on Calculating TMO Allowances. The Guidance was researched and published because the NFTMO was aware that calculating and negotiating allowances has become a more complex and difficult process for many TMOs and their landlords.

This year we have a small amount of grant from the TEP Programme to help us follow up on the publication and one of the things we are doing is offering onsite half day workshops (on calculating allowances) for TMOs. The workshops will be run by Liz Michael, who wrote the guidance, during November. If your TMO would like a workshop run for you by Liz then you will need to provide the venue and refreshments. The fee payable to the NFTMO will be only £150 plus VAT. The workshop must be open to all your committee members and we would want a minimum of 6 TMO members attending.

We can only offer a limited number of sessions on these terms so arrangements will be made on a



first come, first served basis. If you want to book a workshop please contact the NFTMO on 01704 227053 or at [contact@nftmo.com](mailto:contact@nftmo.com)

## MEMBERS HEALTH CHECK QUIZ – PAGE 8 HOW DID YOU DO?

**A score of between 55 to 70** indicates that you seem to be well informed and involved in this aspect of the TMO's work. Use the Health Check process to check that other committee members feel equally in touch with things. If this is one of your special areas of responsibility it may be fine for you to score higher but make sure that the TMO is not relying on you too much. For example could things carry on smoothly if you were absent for a long period through illness?

**A score of between 35 and 54** suggests that as a Committee member you could be better informed and involved in this aspect of the TMO's work. Look at your scores to see where changes may be needed. Use the Health Check

process to explore how the TMO can help you to become better informed and involved in those 'weaker' areas. Find out if other committee members score low on similar questions as there may action that the TMO needs to take.

**A score of less than 35** indicates that changes may be needed in order for you to be a more effective Committee member. Use the Health Check process to look at how the TMO can help you to become better informed and involved in this topic area. Find out if other committee members feel the same as you do because there may be a wider problem that the TMO needs to address.

## TMO CONFERENCE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **One Day Regional TMO Conference (South)**  
Tuesday 15th February 2011  
Grosvenor Hotel (Victoria) London
- **One Day Regional TMO Conference (North and Midlands)**  
Wednesday 23rd February 2011  
Palace Hotel, Manchester

**Fee:** NFTMO Members £50 + VAT,  
Non Members £80 + VAT

To book: e-mail [contact@nftmo.com](mailto:contact@nftmo.com)

## ANNUAL NFTMO CONFERENCE AND AGM

*Friday 10th – Sunday 12th June 2011*

The annual conference returns, by popular demand, to the Holiday Inn in Stratford-upon-Avon. Full details and booking arrangements will be published in the New Year.

## ABOUT THE NFTMO

The National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO) is a national voluntary membership organisation. Our main purpose is to facilitate networking and support for TMOs in England and to promote community control as an option within regeneration initiatives and in areas of greatest need. We have an elected voluntary management committee and a part-time co-ordinator.

We run national and regional conferences and training courses for TMO members and staff. We promote good practice through guidance and initiatives like our Good Governance Kite Mark. Membership is open to all TMOs and similar organisations and to tenants groups who are working toward tenant management. You can download an application form from our website.

Visit our website at [www.nftmo.com](http://www.nftmo.com) or contact us at [contact@nftmo.com](mailto:contact@nftmo.com) or on 01704 227053.