



Forward together

Moving **forward together** as one, stronger organisation

Issue 3, June 2011

Welcome to the third issue of your regular newsletter keeping you informed about the plans to bring together all of the boards across Somer Housing Group – that is Redland Housing Association, Shape Housing Association and Somer Community Housing Trust – into one combined board.

You may have noticed that this newsletter has been renamed, from *Better Together* to *Forward Together* – a change in emphasis that residents have asked for. Now we have plans agreed we really can move forward together.



Victor da Cunha
Chief Executive, Somer Housing Group

Inside...

- » The **latest news** on these changes.
- » How are residents being **involved** - now and in the future?
- » **Timeline** - what's happened so far and what's coming up.
- » **Ask Victor...** your questions answered.
- » Have **your say**.

At a glance

What's happening?

- » We are **bringing together the four boards**: Somer Housing Group, Redland, Shape and Somer Community Housing Trust.
- » Once in place, this will allow us to **reduce duplication and plan for the best interests of all of our customers**.
- » These changes will not have any effect on what we charge for our homes. **Ownership of your home will remain within Somer Housing Group** – as it is right now.

And why?

- » One combined board will be **more efficient, more effective and will offer better value for money**.
- » One combined board will mean **much quicker decision-making** so we will be more responsive.
- » We will be able to think about **all of our customers** at the same time.
- » We will be able to **respond better** to a tougher housing environment which faces big cuts in government funding.

Latest news

The big news is that on 6th June 2011 each of the boards agreed to simplify what is currently a complicated and sometimes slow-moving structure of four separate boards (see diagram). A new combined board will be recruited from existing board members across the Group and should be in place by September of this year.

What does this mean for you?

These changes will mean we can cut out lots of duplicate board work, making for faster decision-making and offering you the highest standards of service from across the Group.

This will not affect the name of your landlord, your rent, your rights or your tenancy or lease conditions – every home will remain, as it is now, within Somer Housing Group.

Ask Victor...

Victor da Cunha joined Somer Housing Group as Chief Executive in April this year. Originally from London, Victor has been out and about meeting residents, colleagues and other stakeholders in his first few weeks. Here, Victor answers a few of the questions you have raised so far:

Will there be any changes to my tenancy agreement or my rent?

“We will not be changing the conditions of tenancy agreements, leases or rights of any of our residents – whether tenants or leaseholders – because of these changes. That’s because ownership of all homes would remain as it is now.”

Will we lose our charitable status because of these changes?

“We’ve looked into this very carefully to make sure that the way we join together protects our

From four boards & 50 members...

Redland board
12 members

Shape board
12 members

Trust board
13 members

Group board
13 members

...to one board & 13 members

Combined board
13 members



charitable status. Charitable status is very important to all of us. It means we can access money that we wouldn’t otherwise be able to. But more importantly, it commits us to work for you, our residents. And of course with no profits paid to shareholders, everything is invested in our services to you.”

Will the name of my landlord change?

“Right now, we are combining four separate boards into one – that means that no names will change as the four organisations will still exist. However in the long term it may be simpler (and cost less money when producing information like leaflets and magazines) to all share the same name. Although we’re not thinking about this yet, please do get in touch if you have a strong view on this.”

» **Any questions? Please get in touch – turn to the back page for details.**

August 2010

Review into how we are run.

October 2010

Residents give us their views at special event.

November 2010

Review makes recommendations.

December 2010

All boards agree to recommendations.

February 2011

Residents’ group proposed to help direct changes.

Keeping **you** at the heart of these changes

All the organisations across Somer Housing Group exist for you – our residents. We need to make sure that any changes help to reduce costs or lead to improvements in our services. To be sure that they do that, we need to hear from you, to listen and to involve you in our planning. Many of you have already got in touch with us through our dedicated phone line and email address and have written to us.

Involving residents today...

In April we set up a residents' group – known as the Residents' Governance Involvement Group or RGIG – which has 11 residents representing each organisation in Somer Housing Group.

Chairing this group is John Richardson. John stresses the importance of involving residents in these important changes: "There are 11 of us on this group and we all take our role and responsibility to you very seriously. We are putting a lot of effort into making sure that residents are kept well informed about these changes. As well as helping to put this newsletter together, we are closely involved in commenting on and shaping the proposals, and in feeding in views that we have received from fellow residents."

RGIG's Vice-Chair is Kathleen Hovland: "The RGIG group was formed, at residents' request, to ensure a range of communication with residents – but the RGIG group can't make statements for residents. Victor da Cunha, Chief Executive of Somer Housing Group, and Roger Thomas, the Chair of the Board, are visiting and listening to positive opinions and negative concerns in order to understand residents' identities and their priorities. The new management group needs residents' opinions to create a structure

that reflects the way residents feel about our lives in relation to the properties we live in and the land we live on. Please send your views using the form provided in this newsletter or by email."

As well as this specially-formed residents' group, the three main residents' committees (Redland Residents' Committee, Somer Residents' Committee and ReShape) are also kept closely informed about these changes.

“ The group needs residents' opinions to create a structure that reflects the way we feel about our lives... ”

...and tomorrow

It's also important to know that involving residents in the future will remain as important as ever. There will be four residents on the new combined board of 13, and we are working with existing residents' committees, panels and other groups to agree easy, simple and effective ways for residents from across the Group to be involved in the future of the organisation. Already, we have set up a new Group-wide Scrutiny Panel made up entirely of residents, which has real teeth and can hold the Group to account over its decisions.



Forward together



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Please ask us if you would like this newsletter in large print, audio or another language.

Arabic

إذا كانت لغتك الأصلية ليست الإنجليزية وكنت بحاجة إلى ترجمة فانه بإمكاننا ان نوفرها لك

Bengali

ইংরেজী যদি আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হয় এবং আপনার একটি অনুবাদের প্রয়োজন হয় তবে আমরা আপনার জন্য তা সরবরাহ করতে পারবো।

Chinese

如果你主要说用的语言不是英语而需要翻译服务，我们能够给你安排。

Hindi

यदि अंग्रेज़ी आपकी प्रथम भाषा नहीं है और आपको अनुवाद चाहिये, तो हम आपके लिए ला सकते हैं।

Italian

Se l'inglese non è la vostra lingua e avete bisogno di una traduzione, possiamo procurarvene una.

Polish

Osobom nie znającym języka angielskiego możemy zapewnić tłumaczenie.

Somali

Haddii aanu af Ingiriisigu ahayn luqad-daada kowaad oo aad u baahan-tahay turjumid, anaga ayaa mid kuu heli karayna.

Spanish

Si el Ingles no es tu lengua materna y necesitas una traduccion, nosotros te lo podemos traducir.

Thai

หากภาษาอังกฤษไม่ใช่ภาษาแรกของท่านพูดและท่านต้องการให้แปล เป็นภาษาอื่น เราสามารถจัดบริการให้ท่านได้

Urdu

اگر انگریزی آپ کی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو ترجمہ درکار ہے تو ہم آپ کے لیے اس کا بندوبست کریں گے۔



Please get in touch...

Do you have any questions or comments about these changes? Please get in touch by email or phone (see above), or by sending this tear-off slip back to us using the freepost address above.

Your comments: _____

How would you prefer to be kept informed about these changes? (Please tick as many as you like.)

- Newsletters/magazines. Emails.
 Meetings or events. Through our website.
 'Social media' like Facebook or Twitter.
 Other – please specify: _____

If you would like a reply, please leave your name and a way that we can contact you:

First name: _____ Last name: _____ Mr Mrs Ms Other: _____

Address (including post code): _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____