



PS Consultants
Your Independent
Tenant and
Leaseholder Adviser

YOUR HOME, YOUR CHOICE

You decide the future for your home

NEWSLETTER 1 AUGUST 2022 from the Independent Tenant & Leaseholder Adviser - PS Consultants

A few weeks ago we sent you a short leaflet telling you about the proposal to consult tenants and leaseholders in the Patmos area about the possible transfer of Lambeth Council homes to a new organisation called 'Vision Homes Lambeth' (VHL).

As we said in that leaflet, this is not the first time that this proposal has been made. If you lived in the area then you will recall that between 2016 and 2019 there was a programme of tenant and leaseholder consultation around the transfer issue. The issue is before you again because the Greater London Authority, which in 2019 did not think the proposal should go to a ballot, has now agreed that there should be a ballot to see whether tenants want to remain as Lambeth Council tenants or transfer the ownership of their homes to Vision Homes Lambeth (VHL).

What's in this newsletter?

In this first newsletter you will find;

- **Information about what the proposed transfer of council homes in the Lambeth area would mean for you as a tenant or leaseholder. We will be adding to this information in further editions of this newsletter.**

- **Information about the *timetable* for this process**
- **Details of how you can *contact* us**
- **Details of the *meetings* and *drop-in sessions* we will be holding to explain the proposals**

Keeping you informed

We know from the questions we were asked the previous time this proposal was considered that you will have many questions about such things as;

- **Rents**
- **Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements**
- **Your tenancy (including the right of succession to that tenancy)**
- **How your home would be managed**
- **Who are VHL?**

In this newsletter we begin to answer some of these questions. In future editions of this newsletter we will give you information on all of them. But if you have questions now then you can contact us via the e.mail address and mobile telephone numbers shown below, and by meeting us at forthcoming drop-in events. You will find the dates, times, and venue for those drop-ins on the back page of this newsletter.



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Don't forget you can talk to the ITLA or ask questions about housing transfer

Email: enquiries@psconsultants.org.uk

Ring or text the **ITLA mobile number - 07903 370147** (if you text us with your telephone number we will ring you back as soon as we can)

Website: www.itla.psconsultants.org.uk

This newsletter is written and produced by PS Consultants,
Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Adviser (ITLA)



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What is Stock Transfer?

Councils are what are known as 'registered providers' of social housing, as are housing associations, and some "for-profit" organisations.

- **'Stock Transfer'** is a process in which the homes that are owned by a council are transferred to another 'registered provider'.
- All 'registered providers' are regulated by a Government agency known as the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The RSH sets the quality standards for all 'registered providers', and it monitors their performance against those standards. It also issues binding guidelines on rents.
- Transfer, if it happens, does not mean that anyone has to move home. It simply means that Lambeth Council would no longer own or manage your homes. Both the ownership and management of your homes would be in the hands of Vision Homes Lambeth (VHL).

What is unusual in this transfer is that the 'registered provider' looking to take the transfer of Lambeth Council homes will be what is known as a 'for-profit' registered provider, and not, as is normally the case in stock transfers, a housing association.

And whereas in virtually all stock transfers to date the council consulting its tenants and leaseholders on transfer supports the proposal, Lambeth Council has made it clear from the outset that it opposes this transfer.

The Transfer Consultation Process

The way that this consultation process about possible transfer to Vision Homes Lambeth (VHL) works is set out in Government legislation (the 2013 Right to Transfer Regulations).

The formal part of the process has two parts to it:

Stage 1

Lambeth Council will write to all tenants and leaseholders telling you about the proposal to transfer the ownership of your homes to VHL. That letter will be accompanied by what is known as an Offer Document. That document will set out the differences between remaining as a tenant or leaseholder of Lambeth Council and transferring to become a tenant or leaseholder of Vision Homes Lambeth. Tenants and leaseholder will have 28 days to give their comments about the document back to the Council, which the Council will then consider.

Stage 2

Having considered any comments from tenants and leaseholders Lambeth Council may then proceed to write to tenants informing them of the Council's intention to proceed to a postal ballot of all tenants. Leaseholders would not be balloted, in line with government guidance. Such a ballot would normally run for up to 28 days and will be conducted by an independent external organisation.

What happens if the ballot vote is 'No'?

If the ballot vote is 'No' then your homes will remain in the ownership of Lambeth Council and would not transfer to Vision Homes Lambeth.

What happens if the ballot vote is 'Yes'?

Lambeth Council's Cabinet would report that outcome to Full Council and the Council would, in turn, make a submission to the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Government (the Secretary of State). If consent to transfer is then granted a Transfer Agreement between Lambeth Council and Vision Homes Lambeth would be finalised.

What is the timetable for the process?

Lambeth Council have indicated that currently they propose that

- **Stage 1** to begin at the end of September 2022 and end in October 2022
- **Stage 2** to begin in October 2022 and end on or before November 30th 2022

Letter from Lambeth Council to Patmos Area Residents

You will have recently received a letter from Lambeth Council about the transfer proposal. As ITLA we have commented on that letter. You will find our reply as an insert to this newsletter.

Who are VHL?

If transfer goes ahead Vision Homes Lambeth (VHL) will be what is known as a 'for-profit' registered provider. Prior to the passing of the 2008 Housing Act by the last Labour Government it was only lawful for council homes to be transferred to not-for-profit organisations such as housing associations. Since that Act came into law it has been lawful for a 'for-profit' registered provider to take over the ownership and management of council owned homes provided tenants agree to the proposal in a ballot. If this transfer goes ahead it will be the first to a 'for-profit' registered provider.

So there are three main types of 'registered provider' of social housing in England; local councils; private registered providers such as housing associations; and for-profit registered providers (such as VHL). They are all regulated by a Government appointed body called the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH), The RSH oversees the operation of all registered providers, including setting the standards for services, and issuing rent guidelines which all registered providers must follow.

VHL itself is part of the Berger Group of Companies. If transfer went ahead it would be run by its own Board and would require the consent of the RSH to become a registered provider. There will be three tenant members of that Board.

Don't forget you can talk to the ITLA or ask questions about housing transfer

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Website: www.itla.psconsultants.org.uk

What we will be doing as the Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Adviser

- **Drop in Sessions**

The ITLA Team will be present to talk to tenants and leaseholders about the proposed transfer at two sessions organised by VHL on:

Tuesday, September 6th from 6.00pm to 8.00pm, and

Wednesday, September 7th from 11.00am to 3.00pm

Both sessions will be at 81 Lothian Road.

- **Consultation Meetings**

We are planning to hold three meetings to discuss the transfer proposal in September. The ITLA will chair the meetings and we will invite representatives of VHL and Lambeth Council to be present at each meeting. We will give you more details of these events as soon as we have them.

- **Home Visits**

We know that not everyone will be able to come to meetings or drop-ins. If you have a problem which prevents you from getting out to them, then if you contact us we will get back to you to try to arrange a convenient time for Jim Mitchell of our ITLA Team to visit you and talk through the issues.

Remember, you can contact us by:

Email: enquiries@psconsultants.org.uk and

Mobile telephone: on 07903 370147

- **Door-knocking**

Later in the process we will also be knocking on every door to answer the questions you may have.

- **Newsletters**

We will also be producing two more newsletters to give you more information and to reply to the questions we have been asked about this transfer proposal.

- **ITLA Website**

There is more information about housing stock transfer at: www.itla.psconsultants.org.uk

Meet the ITLA Team



Dr Steve Sharples



Christine Bailey



Jim Mitchell

The team has worked with many tenants and residents on housing, regeneration and transfer issues.