

Briefing Note

Committee name: Cabinet Housing Committee

Date: 29 July 2026

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This note provides information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the officer indicated.

Government Strategy and Announcements

- a. As part of his Labour leadership campaign, Andy Burnham MP placed council housing at the centre of his vision for economic renewal, pledging to deliver the largest social housing building programme since the post-war period. He said that *"everything starts with a good home, and this country finally has to put that at the top of its priority list,"* with social housing as *"the foundation of working-class aspiration"*. He also spoke of his wider agenda for devolution, fiscal reform, local regeneration and expanding opportunities for working-class communities. His plans for housing include unlocking vacant land for development, following the Housing First philosophy pioneered in Finland, and increasing the supply of affordable council homes to reduce pressure on welfare bills and local authorities.
- b. The government published the final impact assessment for the Social Housing Bill (sometimes referred to as the Social Housing Renewal Bill) ahead of it beginning committee stage in the House of Lords on 15 June. The impact assessment focuses heavily on the Bill's proposed Right to Buy reforms, which are intended to address the long-term loss of social housing stock. It would extend the Right to Buy qualifying period from three to ten years, reduce discounts, exempt new build social homes from sale for 35 years, exempt certain rural homes, and extend rights of first refusal indefinitely. The assessment estimates that these changes could turn a projected net loss to a net gain of approximately 18,000 homes. It also highlights measures to strengthen protections for victims of domestic abuse by enabling perpetrators to be removed from joint tenancies while allowing victims to remain in their homes.

During the Second Reading in the House of Lords, the Bill received broad support across much of the House, but peers from all parties argued that it must be accompanied by a much larger programme of social housebuilding if it is to address

the scale of England's housing crisis.

The Committee Stage is expected to include the tabling of amendments on issues including housing supply, regeneration, building safety, rural housing and implementation of the domestic abuse provisions.

- c. Following the announcement of the Remediation Bill in the King's Speech, the government have issued a call for evidence to inform a new Building Professions Strategy, a consultation on the creation of a new college of fire and rescue, reforms to building control, and a new Public Engagement Policy. The Call for Evidence will close on the 12 August with the new Strategy expected in 2027.
- d. An eight-week consultation has been launched on the government's proposals to introduce a new zero rate of VAT for the sale of land intended for the construction of new social housing to speed up delivery. This will potentially allow providers to purchase land early in the development process without incurring VAT. Under the current VAT regime, land can only be sold to a social housing provider free of VAT once foundations have been laid, requiring developers and providers to delay land transfers or complete complex phased transactions as individual plots reach the required stage, creating additional costs, cashflow pressures and delays to delivery. The consultation will run to the 18 August and seeks evidence on how the current VAT framework affects land acquisition, development timing and financing, as well as views on the design, scope, eligibility criteria and administration of any new relief.
- e. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Steve Reed MP, used a speech to the Lloyds Social Housing Forum to set out further measures to improve the quality of existing homes and increase resident control over housing services. He confirmed that as part of the government's commitment to introducing the new Decent Homes Standard (DHS), further guidance on quality regulations will be published later this year following engagement with the sector. The government will also be launching a consultation on extending the proposed Right to Manage to housing association tenants.
- f. Speaking in Leeds, the Housing Minister, Matthew Pennycook MP, has announced that the government's Small Sites Aggregator will be rolled out nationally following pilots in Bristol, Sheffield and Lewisham. The initiative aims to unlock dormant and unviable small brownfield sites by creating new public and private sector partnerships, with the aim of building 10,000 social rent and affordable homes a year. He also highlighted the positive and ambitious response to the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP). The fund is currently significantly oversubscribed, and housing providers have been asked to re-profile bids by Homes England. It has also recently been confirmed that affordable homes for the government's new towns will also be funded through the SAHP.

He further announced that the government is working in partnership with 23 local authorities to develop a pattern book of standard house designs by the end of the year, which will support economies of scale, encourage investment in modern methods of construction (MMC), reduce barriers for small and medium sized developers and help local authorities deliver homes on small sites they own.

- g. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has published Homes England statistics for 2025-26 showing 42,433 housing starts (an 11% increase from the previous year) and 32,243 completions (a 9% increase). This has included a significant increase in affordable homes which represent 80% of all Homes England completions, within that figure those for social rent has increased 65% since 2024-25. The figures were highlighted in advance of the new £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme.
- h. The Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCLG) Committee has published a new report on “Affordability of Home Ownership”. The report highlights that the current definition of affordable housing does not reflect need across England and they have called for a new statutory definition linked to local incomes rather than solely local market rents or house prices. The report also highlights the importance of having a range of tenures to meet housing needs, the need to continue to address the backlog of unsold S106 affordable homes, and recommends reforms to stamp duty.
- i. The HCLG Committee also published its pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill. They have highlighted this is a significant step forward but warned that the government needs to go further and faster to cap ground rents, give homeowners greater control over their buildings and tackle poor property management standards.
- j. A new data sharing partnership has been announced between the Cabinet Office and Airbnb to tackle the illegal subletting of social housing. It will initially be rolled out to London, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Anglesey. The partnership, led by the Public Sector Fraud Authority, will allow local authorities to match social housing records against Airbnb listings to identify fraudulent subletting, with confirmed cases potentially resulting in eviction, fines and up to two years' imprisonment.

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)

- k. Following tenant consultation a new Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) will be introduced from the 2026-27 reporting year, covering electrical safety checks to provide greater transparency. It will require large social landlords to report their compliance in line with existing regulations and will not introduce any new legal obligations.
- l. The RSH have also launched a two-year independent evaluation of the consumer regulation regime. The evaluation will be carried out by a research consortium made up of RAND Europe, Shared Intelligence and the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research who will consult with landlords, tenants and other stakeholders. It will assess whether reforms have led to changes for tenants and landlords, and will help inform future decisions about how the Regulator maintains a proportionate, risk based and outcome focused approach.

The announcement comes at the same time as the National Audit Office (NAO) launched a review into the quality of social housing and the effectiveness of government reforms to the sector. The review will consider the condition of social

housing stock, the effectiveness of the regulatory framework and reforms, financial sustainability, and the pace and scale of change and outcomes for tenants. The final report is expected to be published in the winter of 2026-27.

Housing Ombudsman

- m. The Housing Ombudsman has published a new findings report on lessons from its further investigations into landlords. Focusing on recurring weaknesses in policies, processes, systems, governance and oversight. It highlighted the importance of landlords using complaint data to identify and address underlying issues before they escalate. The Ombudsman recently reviewed CBC's Complaints Policy and have, following the recommendation of some minor amendments, confirmed that they are happy with how complaints are being handled. The report also announced a new three tier Continuing Professional Development training programme on root cause analysis, available to member landlords from Autumn 2026.

Research and Campaigns

- n. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) has launched a UK-wide project in collaboration with the National Housing Maintenance Forum to maximise resident engagement in how repairs and maintenance services are delivered across the social rented sector. It will run through to summer 2027 to define what excellent repairs look like and what tools are needed to implement them in practice. It aims to develop a toolkit for repairs that will ensure outputs are grounded in real experience, alongside a free resident scrutiny toolkit, and the development of a culture and accountability framework for landlords and contractors.
- o. The campaign group Stop Social Housing Stigma (SSHS) has published its national tenant survey. Of the 1,643 social housing tenants surveyed, 70% felt stigmatised living in social housing (including 54% that felt stigmatised because of the actions of their landlords), while 68% believed that successive governments have done little or nothing to address such stigma. The report notes that tenants who did not feel stigmatised often highlighted good communication, respectful staff, well-maintained homes, and mixed tenure communities.

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