



Edition 2
January 2023

R E A D I N G
H O U S I N G A S S O C I A T I O N

TRANSFER NEWS

EDITION 2 – JANUARY 2023

Important Update – Please Read

Happy New Year and welcome to the 2nd edition of Transfer News that aims to keep you regularly updated on progress with the plans for our proposed Transfer of Engagements to another housing association.

You will recall from Edition 1 of Transfer News that we are looking at a transfer in the hope that another suitable housing association will be able to do much more for our tenants and the wider community than we can if we stay independent and try to address the range of issues that we face in these very challenging times.

Our first newsletter outlined the priorities and objectives that we would want addressed for you through the transfer. We included a survey to check that we had the priorities right and to ask views on what was most important to you. We also held three open sessions on Tuesday 22 November 2022 to allow tenants, factored owners, and shareholders to come along and hear more about our plans directly from Jill Cronin, our Interim Director and Mags Lightbody, our Transfer Adviser. We also invited you to join a new Transfer Focus Group to help shape the transfer plans.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. It was fantastic to get your feedback!

Your Views - Survey Results

We issued the Transfer News and Survey by post on 9 November 2022 to all tenants, factored owners, and shareholders with 25 November 2022 as the closing date for responses. 145 survey forms were returned. Given that the survey took place at the same time as our 3 yearly full Customer Satisfaction Survey, the responses rate is considered good at almost 14% for tenants and 9% for owners.

A summary of the responses is as follows:

Question 1 - Do our transfer objectives reflect what you think are the most important priorities for you as a tenant or customer of Reidvale Housing Association?

There was majority support **77 (53%)** agreeing that we have captured the priorities correctly.

45 (31%) were unsure. This is to be expected at this early stage of engagement with tenants/ owners looking for more information before they are asked to make any key decisions. Reidvale is committed to making sure its tenants have the right information and support and opportunities to shape the transfer proposal before it moves to the stage of formal consultation and the tenant ballot.

19 (13%) did not agree that the priorities were correct. Most in this category did not suggest other objectives. A small number were against the principle of transfer and wanted Reidvale to stay independent. 4 (3%) did not answer the question.

Question 2 - Please let us know below if we have missed any issues that you think need to be addressed.

Feedback highlighted areas of real concerns in the community. Improving the repairs service and maintenance support featured strongly, as did tackling anti-social behaviour and concerns about drug activity in the area. We also received some very helpful suggestions for additional areas to consider, namely; bulk uplift service, litter and refuse collection, handy persons service, support for the elderly, digital access. We have now reflected the feedback in our updated transfer priorities/ objectives.

Question 3 - Please rank the six identified objectives in order of importance to you.

Not surprisingly, tenants rated **Rent Affordability** and **Investment in their Homes** as the most important objectives. Tenants reported that investment is needed on windows, kitchens, bathrooms, and heating as these are considered to be long overdue. Factored owners had **Customer Excellence** as their top priority. We will use this information to weight each objective when we move to assess and score the transfer proposals that we hope to receive from interested housing associations.

Focus Groups

As part of the survey, we sought interest in joining a new transfer Focus Group to act as a 'sounding board' throughout the transfer process. We had a great response with **18** people saying they would like to join the new Group. We will contact these individuals to thank them for their interest and advise them that we will be in touch in early 2023 to convene a first meeting.

Open Sessions

Three open sessions were held over the course of 22 November 2022 in the Neighbourhood Centre. In total, 39 tenants/ factored owners/ shareholders attended. A presentation was made, and this can be accessed via our website www.reidvale.org.uk. If you wish a paper copy, please call the office directly.

Those who attended were keen to hear more on the rationale for the transfer plans and what this would mean for tenants and factored owners. Officers explained the range of challenges that we face if we stay independent. The Association is still not compliant with the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Standards. In terms of the Association's 30 year financial plan, this shows that investment in our homes is already overdue and delivering what tenants want now - windows, kitchens, bathrooms, heating, as well as the large stonework programme that is required, will take time, and will require levels of rent increase that we feel will create real affordability issues for our tenants.

Some attending noted that standards had slipped at Reidvale over the past years and that they wanted to see change. Others were keen that Reidvale stay independent given its

proud origins and community focus. Some noted that they would not want to see Reidvale join Wheatley Homes Glasgow (formerly GHA) as they felt it was too big.

The Transfer Adviser who has supported seven other housing associations with recent partnerships/ transfers gave a flavour of what tenants have been offered in other cases through a change of landlord. She noted that when two housing associations join together it can release really big savings through less management and back office costs. These savings can then be used on things that matter most to tenants. Other transfers have commonly seen tenants enjoying faster investment in their homes and the environment, coupled with lower rent increases (in some cases, rent freezes) as well as a range of other improvement to services. At the same time, things like local staff and services have been preserved.

Everyone was assured that Reidvale is at the first stage of testing what other housing associations who are interested in the transfer of Reidvale are prepared to offer to Reidvale's tenants. The transfer is a big change, and this rightly takes time to make sure tenants shape the plans and are in favour of them. These transfers typically can take up to a year from the point of a transfer partner being identified.

The Management Committee would have to be convinced that an offer is very attractive for tenants before proceeding further. Tenants will be in the driving seat on any change as a transfer can only happen if tenants support it. As reported in the last Transfer News, all tenants' rights, factoring agreements and staff terms and conditions would be fully protected in a transfer.

Early Results from 3 Yearly Customer Satisfaction Survey

We have received the early results from the full Customer Satisfaction Survey that took place over November and December. The final report has still to be considered by the Management Committee and we will share the findings in our next routine newsletter. At this stage, we can share that unfortunately, we have seen a substantial dip in satisfaction levels across the majority of key indicators since the last survey in 2019. Whilst some of this will no doubt have been driven by the Covid crisis and the impact this had on services, it is clear that tenants are concerned about the services they receive from us.

Key areas raised were the Quality of Housing with "poor windows", "out dated kitchens", "high energy costs" and "houses needing general refurbishments" being mentioned. Satisfaction with the repairs service was another key theme ("quality issues", "jobs not being done right first

time" and repairs being "too slow". Neighbourhood management was another area that tenants were unhappy about ("lack of cleanliness around bins", "poor close cleaning service" and "lack of attention to environmental issues"). This confirms that tenants rightly want more from Reidvale that it has been able to deliver. We have fed all of this into the transfer process.

Again, we thank everyone who took part in the surveys and/ or attended the session to provide your input. All of your feedback has been invaluable, and we hope more of you get involved as the process develops. We have now reflected all that you have told us into the updated transfer priorities/ objectives and the Transfer Prospectus that we have now issued to interested housing associations. We will also create a Frequently Asked Questions section on our website and hope to have this live early in the new year.



Transfer Update

We told you in the last Transfer News that we had just placed an advert in the Scottish housing press to invite any housing association interested in becoming our transfer partner to express an initial note of interest. At the closing date, five housing associations had lodged an interest. We have committed to strict confidentiality and with this, will not reveal the identity of the housing associations involved aside from the appointed preferred transfer partner. Given the questions at the Open Sessions specifically around Wheatley Homes Glasgow (formerly GHA), we can confirm that they did not express an interest.

On 9 December 2022, we issued a detailed Transfer Prospectus to the five potential partners setting out our future priorities/ transfer objectives that any future landlord would have to make detailed commitments against. The five have until 13 February 2023 to submit their detailed proposals.

A Subgroup of the Management Committee supported by advisers will then conduct a detailed assessment and scoring of each proposal received. It will then report its findings to the full Management Committee hopefully around the end of March 2023 on whether it is able to recommend one of the housing association proposals for appointment as preferred transfer partner based on what would be considered an attractive offer to Reidvale tenants.

Assuming that we get a proposal that we think would be well received by our tenants, at that stage, and before the appointment is made, we want to do something new for these types of transfers. This would involve testing at this early stage what our tenants think about the offer and whether they would support us proceeding to the next stages of the transfer process.

Please note that if tenants do want us to move to the next stage of the process, this does not mean that they are agreeing to transfer.



A New Approach to Transfer Consultation

Some of you asked why we did not consult tenants before deciding to explore a transfer of engagements. At that stage of the options appraisal, we would have been asking you about a range of structural options that are quite technical and complex in themselves. Whilst we would have been able to tell you what Reidvale can and cannot do if we stay independent set against the host of challenges we face, we would not have been able to tell you what would be on offer if we became part of another landlord to allow you to take an informed view. Rather, the Management Committee made the decision to explore a transfer of engagements as that offered the greatest opportunity for financial savings that could then be used to do more for our tenants and the community.

Once we receive detailed proposals and decide if there is one that we think offers an attractive package of benefits to tenants compared to what we could offer, we plan a new consultation with our tenants to allow that informed view to be taken. ***This consultation is in addition to the informal and formal consultation that will still take place if we move to the stage of appointing the transfer partner, developing the detailed joint transfer Business Case/ tenant commitments, and extensively consulting on these.***

In line with legislation and statutory guidance, the transfer is about the change of social landlord for our tenants. With this, we will conduct this new and additional consultation only with our current tenants (including joint

tenants). As with all communications, we will copy this to our factored owners customer, shareholders, and key stakeholders to keep everyone in the picture.

The consultation will present what Reidvale does / will be able to do on the 6 transfer objectives, against the highlights of what the top scoring housing association proposal has offered to allow comparison. At this stage, we will still keep the identity of the other housing association confidential.

We will ask tenants a simple question along the lines of, based on what is presented, whether you:

- are supportive of us moving onto the next stage of appointing the preferred transfer partner to work with us on developing the detailed Business Case and tenant commitments that would be further shaped by tenant opinion, **OR;**
- would you prefer Reidvale stay independent knowing what that would mean in terms of rent increase assumptions/ investment plans etc and what Reidvale would need to address.

The responses will provide an early test of tenant opinion on the transfer principle, once tenants know what would be on offer.

We plan to do the consultation **before** the stage of formally appointing a preferred transfer partner hopefully over **April/ May 2023**.

If tenants are supportive of moving forward with the transfer, we would then appoint and announce the identity

of the preferred transfer partner in late May 2023. Such support would provide early assurance to our Management Committee that the will of tenants is driving the process forward, allowing confidence as we move into the next stages.

If tenants respond that they want Reidvale to stay independent, knowing what that would mean, then tenants will have made an informed decision on the future. Management Committee would likely need to abandon the transfer route and would then need to carefully consider and develop a plan of lengthy and costly action to address the current regulatory non-compliance and the range of serious issues facing the Association. It would need to engage with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to discuss the plans to tackle these issues and how long that would take. The SHR will want assurance that Reidvale can address the non-compliance with its Regulatory Standards.

We plan to appoint an Independent Tenant Adviser (ITA) in early 2023 to provide free and independent advice to our tenants on the transfer so that you have all the information you need, and you are supported throughout the process. We will let you know who the ITA is and how you can contact them once they are in place. We will work with the appointed ITA to shape this new consultation.

**Please watch out for this
consultation when it takes
place and take the short time
to respond.**

**It is vital that our tenants have
their say and shape
the future!**



Keeping you Informed

Provided we get to the stage of appointing a preferred transfer partner, we will prepare a detailed and extensive consultation plan to make sure our tenants are fully informed and consulted on the transfer plans. We will copy all communications to factored owners customers, shareholding members of Reidvale and other key stakeholders. We will keep you updated in a number of ways:

- Transfer News – we will continue to provide updates at key stages of the process through these transfer specific newsletters.
- Reidvale website – we have a dedicated Transfer page on the Reidvale website which will be kept up to date with the latest transfer news

If you need this newsletter in another form or if you have any question or concerns, please do not hesitate to email us at transfer@reidvale.org.uk or call our office on 0141 554 2406.



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