



## Supporting our membership 2016

**Introduction** - This summary sets out the work the CCH has done for our membership over the last year.

**Consultation and networking** – long term CCH members will know that we carried out a large membership survey in 2015, and priorities identified in that survey have driven our work with members in 2016. Members told us that the three most important issues for the housing co-op movement are:

- supporting existing co-ops to maintain viability and governance
- building more co-operative homes
- helping with the sustainability of co-op committees/governance

We have carried out two further consultations with members in 2016:

- on the potential effects of Government rent reductions and Local Housing Allowance caps
- on the Homes and Communities Agency's proposed fees.

We have also held two well attended regional member meetings in London in March and in Liverpool in October. The main issues discussed at those member meetings were:

- an update on policy issues
- the CCH's work on developing new co-operative homes and the potential for development
- discussions on viability and governance, including the launch of the CCH's guidance on long term financing

**Government policy** – our approach to dialogue with Government on changing policies has been informed by our communications with our members. Generally, CCH members have been satisfied with our approach on Government policies and are pleased that our sector has largely been exempted from most of the new policies being introduced. We have been keeping members informed on policy changes in our regular member updates.

The key issues have been:

- we met with Government officers to discuss Voluntary Right to Buy. It remains the view that the contractual tenancies of fully mutual co-ops will exempt them from Voluntary Right to Buy and that this exemption may also be extended to non-fully mutual co-ops.
- we also had dialogue on rent reductions and Local Housing Allowance caps. Government officers asked us to provide evidence of their effects on our sector and we consulted with the sector on this, setting out the case for exemption. We were pleased to report that we successfully achieved exemption for the sector on rent reductions for the full 4 year Government programme and from Local Housing Allowance caps until 2020. The latter most notably would have made it difficult for housing co-ops to house tenants on benefits under the age of 35.
- Pay to Stay and restrictions on Lifetime Tenancies do not appear to be affecting the co-operative housing sector at present.

**Member guidance** – we launched our long-term finance planning guidance during the year and this has been well received by those members who have considered it. We are updating our Governance and Management Guidance (formerly our accreditation framework) and this update will be launched on our website shortly.

**Developing new homes** – members have identified the importance of our work to support the development of new co-operative homes. At our 2016 conference, we launched 1,001 Co-operative Homes, a publication highlighting the new schemes being developed across the co-operative sector in England and Wales. Our work with the Welsh Government and the Wales Co-operative Centre to develop a housing co-op sector continues with the Welsh Government elected in 2016 re-confirming their support for co-operative housing. The UK Government has indicated some levels of support for community-led housing but its programmes are less clear. We particularly had dialogue with Government officers regarding a £60m per annum fund to develop new primarily home ownership related co-operative and community-led housing in areas particularly affected by second homes, and the Government made an announcement on this just before Christmas. The CCH has also engaged with the Greater London Authority and the West Midlands Combined Authority on the development of co-operative housing. We have also had dialogue with the Co-operative Party regarding a joint approach to co-operative housing policy.

**Work with mutual housing associations** – during 2016, we have worked with a group of 6 mutual housing associations on a programme called Mutual Governance Mutual Options – exploring the benefits of mutual housing associations and examining how they are governed. The report on that work is due early in 2017.

**Tenant management** – we had dialogue with tenant management partners regarding the future of the sector and this is intended to lead to work to support TMOs in 2017. We also specifically assisted a particular TMO regarding the potential sale of high value void homes.

**Providing services** - we have formally provided services to 32 co-op and other organisations over the last year. This assistance ranged from small pieces of governance work to much larger policy reviews.

**CCH training programme** – the CCH’s training programme has become increasingly popular with our members, with regular good attendance at sessions. A wide range of sessions have been held throughout the year.

**Rules** – we have worked with Co-operatives UK to produce new Model Rules for housing co-ops and for management co-ops. The former has been agreed by the HCA. These rules will be registered and publicised in 2017.

**CCH governance** – the CCH’s Board continues to function well and recruitment for new Board members to replace some who are stepping down after 3 years will take place in the new year. We have continued to update our website, but work remains to carry out further updates to enable greater usage by our members.

**Plans for next year** – based on what members have told us they want, we plan the following activities for next year:

- ongoing and developing communications with members, particularly using digital communications methods
- ongoing dialogue with Government about policy changes
- a response to the HCA about their planned fees for Registered Providers
- provision of services to co-ops and other organisations
- continued implementation of the CCH’s training programme

- member guidance documents – potential subjects that our members have asked for guidance on include committee and governance sustainability, Value for Money statements, understanding accounts
- launch of a revised guidance document – New Co-operative and Community-Led Homes - on developing new co-operative homes, aimed at existing co-ops, housing associations and local authorities
- ongoing publicity work to local authorities and others about the potential for co-operative and community-led homes
- a programme to explore forward planning and development in London relating to the tenant management sector
- the launch of our Mutual Governance Mutual Options report and further consequent work
- development of a joint CCH/Co-operative Party co-operative housing policy programme

We are planning the following dates:

- **CCH annual conference, Haydock Park – 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> May 2017**
- **CCH Member Policy Forum Birmingham – March 2017**
- **CCH Member Policy Forum London – September 2017**

We look forward to working with our members over the coming year.

**CCH January 2017**