Consultation

The future of housing services in Wigan Borough

We need to know what matters to you about the future of housing in Wigan Borough. Wigan Council is proposing to transfer the current housing service provided by Wigan and Leigh Homes back to the council. Please read the information below and complete the questions at the end. We value your opinions and they will help shape the future of housing services in Wigan Borough.

The Wigan and Leigh Homes journey

Why was Wigan and Leigh Homes set up?

In 2000 the Government increased funding for social housing so that all social housing met decent standards by 2010. Councils set up Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) in order to bid for this funding. In 2001 only 61% of Wigan Borough’s housing stock met the decency standard. Wigan and Leigh Homes was established in 2002 to make sure Wigan Borough was able to attract the funding and invest to improve its housing stock.

What happened after Wigan and Leigh Homes was created?

Wigan and Leigh Homes had to show they were delivering good services to unlock the money. A review of services rated Wigan and Leigh Homes as good, this unlocked £58.3m in 2002 with a further £79m in 2003 to bring homes up to the decency standard.

Our mission

Our mission statement was to develop a true partnership between the council and tenants, to build a vision of secure well maintained homes in safe and attractive areas and to develop a really excellent housing service. Close working with Wigan Council was key to making this happen. At the heart of the ALMO was tenant engagement, with tenants sitting on the board and being involved in service delivery and review.

Our achievements

Wigan and Leigh Homes has achieved a great deal in the past 14 years. This includes:

• 99% of homes now classed as decent – compared to 61% before Wigan and Leigh Homes was established.
• 21,500 new kitchens have been installed.
• Almost 10,000 new bathrooms have been fitted, with adapted bathrooms for people with mobility problems.
• Insulation has been installed to the majority of homes.
• 11,000 roof coverings have been replaced.
• 7,500 homes have been rewired.
• 20,000 new boilers have been fitted
• 354 air source heat pump heating systems have been fitted as part of a ground breaking partnership with major Japanese companies which attracted £4m investment.
• More than 1,465 solar panels have been fitted to provide cheaper energy bills for tenants and generate over £1.3m per year to invest in other projects.
• Since 2009 Wigan and Leigh Homes have built 229 new homes and have 114 units on site and a further 150 units in the pipeline.

We employ 12 housing apprentices and over 60 construction apprentices through our contractors each year. We have employed 115 housing apprentices since we set up.

**Tenant involvement**

Tenants continue to be the largest group of representatives on Wigan and Leigh Homes’ Board. We have strengthened how tenants get involved in improving their local areas. The Better Neighbourhood Fund was established in 2009 and has seen to date £1,490,000 allocated to 772 groups and estate volunteers for activities and environmental improvements that benefits tenants.

**What you have told us**

Overall satisfaction with services has increased from 79% in 2002 to 90% in 2014

Satisfaction with the repairs service has gone from 79% in 2002 to 89% in 2012

Satisfaction with your rent offers value for money has gone from 74% in 2002 to 85% in 2014

**Why change is needed**

The world has changed. There is no longer any additional money coming to the borough by Wigan and Leigh Homes remaining as an ALMO. In fact to keep the company running is diverting resources away from front line services.

We want to be able to keep running the great services that you have been used to and put more into making our communities better and stronger places to live. We will also continue to build new homes to meet the needs of the borough. Wigan has an increasingly elderly population and is facing unprecedented demand upon its health and social care services at the same time as funding levels are being reduced. These challenges are expected to intensify in the next few years as our population gets older and the number of residents with multiple and complex health and care needs grows.

Therefore we propose that the housing service provided by Wigan and Leigh Homes is transferred back to Wigan Council where tenants can benefit from more joined up services particularly working with a range of agencies in your local areas. We want to keep the tenant voice strong in the borough and so an advisory panel will remain as will the Area Forums. The Area Forums will be able to deal with a range of issues affecting you locally, more than just housing. Programmed works to upgrade bathrooms and keep the properties in good condition will continue and investment in properties and neighbourhoods will be accelerated. We will be able to offer better services to people through joined up working for the most vulnerable and will be able to strengthen the work we do to keep people living in the right home for longer, avoiding hospital or home care.
Consultation - the future of housing services in Wigan Borough

Frequently Asked Questions

Will the transfer to the council affect the service I receive?
No, it will simply be delivered by staff at the council who will most likely be the same staff that you deal with now. You will still be able to access housing services at the Wigan and Leigh Life Centres, via the website or through the contact centre. We will have more staff working out in local areas.

Will this affect the work that is due to be carried out at my home?
No, all programmed works will proceed as planned. Wigan Council will continue to keep the homes at a decent standard.

Will staffing levels reduce?
You will still have housing staff on hand to deliver services. We actually anticipate an increase in staff to work within communities.

Will estates return to how they were before the ALMO?
No, Wigan Council is committed to providing high quality housing services to the people of the borough.

Will the contact centre wait times improve?
Wigan Council’s contact centre provides a single access point to a wide range of services. Current satisfaction levels are 96% and the average wait time is under five minutes. We would encourage you to ring at non peak times which are between 10.30am and 1.30pm weekdays and 8.00am to 12.30pm on Saturdays. We are also investing in online services which will allow you to apply for housing online, manage your application and bids for properties on line and also are developing online repairs reporting. This will give you the ability to access services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

To save customers time queuing on the phones, when making a rent payment, they can now call us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on a new designated payment line number, which is 01942 489006 – all you need is your rent reference number to hand.

Will we still be able to apply for Better Neighbourhood Fund?
Yes, the Better Neighbourhood fund will remain and be focused on communities and the neighbourhood where you live.

How to give us your views:
Fill in the ‘Your Views’ card which has been delivered with this document and bring it to the consultation events listed overleaf or drop it in at the Life Centre housing desk.
If you want to leave your comments via the phone please call: 01942 489107
Email us: HousingFuture@walh.co.uk
Submit your comments online via: www.walh.co.uk

Thank you for taking the time to be part of this consultation.
### Consultation Events

**Drop in and have your say on the proposed transfer of services at the following events:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon 21st Nov</td>
<td>6pm to 8pm</td>
<td>Sunshine House, Wellington Street, Scholes WN1 3SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue 22nd Nov</td>
<td>2pm to 4pm</td>
<td>Derby Room, Leigh Library, Town Hall Square, Market Street, Leigh WN7 1EB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 22nd Nov</td>
<td>6pm to 8pm</td>
<td>St Barnabas Church Hall, Marsh Green Road, Marsh Green WN5 0QR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 28th Nov</td>
<td>6pm to 8pm</td>
<td>Sunshine House, Wellington Street, Scholes WN1 3SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 29th Nov</td>
<td>6pm to 8pm</td>
<td>St Peter’s Pavilion, Hurst Street, Hindley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 1st Dec</td>
<td>6pm to 8pm</td>
<td>Function Room at Atherton Arms, 6 Tyldesley Road, Atherton M46 9DD</td>
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**Wigan and Leigh Homes’ Area Forums will also be discussing the changes and you are welcome to attend:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon 21st Nov</td>
<td>10am to 12 noon</td>
<td>Shakerley Community Centre, Cumberland Avenue, Tyldesley M29 8FU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 22nd Nov</td>
<td>10.30am to 12.30pm</td>
<td>Salvation Army, Chapel Street, Ashton in Makerfield WN4 8PB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 23rd Nov</td>
<td>10.30am to 12.30pm</td>
<td>St Mary’s Church , Warrington Road, Lower Ince WN3 4NH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 24th Nov</td>
<td>10.30am to 12.30pm</td>
<td>Masonic Hall, 61 Ellesmere Street., Leigh WN7 4LQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 24th Nov</td>
<td>6.15pm to 8.15pm</td>
<td>Derby Room, Leigh Library, Town Hall Square, Market Street, Leigh WN7 1EB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 25th Nov</td>
<td>10am to 12 noon</td>
<td>St Barnabas Church Hall, Marsh Green Road, Marsh Green WN5 0QR</td>
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