



# Residents' bulletin

March 2011

## A Message from Geoff Redhead...

*Dear Residents*



We wrote to you in October 2010 to advise you about discussions which were taking place between our parent organisation, Cosmopolitan Housing Group (CHG) and Chester & District Housing Trust (CDHT) regarding a potential 'partnership of equals' working arrangement. It is intended that CDHT will join CHG in the same way that Cosmopolitan Housing Association is positioned currently. This will expand CHG's current group structure and is a more cost effective approach to other alternative arrangements.

This bulletin explains how this proposal is progressing and provides some answers to questions which residents have asked over the past six months.

Our vision statement is '**residents first and foremost**' and we have continued to place customers at the very heart of everything that we do; indeed this is the major motivation of this proposal. CDHT shares this ethos, and this is shown in the way they deliver their services.

We remain very much committed to our communities and neighbourhoods, working to gain maximum efficiencies which we will reinvest in your homes so we can provide you with a better service.

We will continue to ensure that we communicate with you regularly during the next few months as this process unfolds.

**Geoff**

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## Progress with the Proposal...

Since writing to all residents in October 2010, CDHT has been discussing with CHG the potential benefits of joining the group. We have been developing a project plan and understanding each other's businesses to ensure that maximum benefit is gained from joining together. A process called "due diligence" is currently underway, which enables both organisations to examine the financial strength of each organisation.

We have been working with the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), who is the regulator for both CHG and CDHT. The TSA will be monitoring the process throughout to ensure that both organisations make the decision for the right reasons.

At the same time, CHG is seeking the views of residents on the proposal for CDHT to join the group structure and for the potential for CDHT's in-house contractor "TrustWorks" to deliver the responsive repairs service.

**Chester & District Housing Trust...** was established in 2000 to take ownership of the large scale transfer of the entire housing stock from Chester City Council. In a relatively short time CDHT has invested in excess of £107million in improvements to housing in the area, established an excellent reputation through the establishment of a Residents' Board, robust financial planning, operational performance and a strong vision to 'create opportunity by doing the right thing'. CDHT owns and manages approximately 6,200 homes, has carried out significant redevelopment within some of the communities it works with and it also has a strong programme to develop more new homes. CDHT is rated as 'two stars and with excellent prospects for improvement' by the Audit Commission.

For CHG and CDHT, there are clear characteristics that are complementary, and are understood by residents, communities, boards, colleagues, regulators, funders, local authorities and many other of our stakeholders.

**For example, our joint:**

- **Understanding of social housing**
- **Visions and Missions**
- **Belief in genuine tenant empowerment**
- **Organisational strengths**
- **Job creation and protection**
- **Commitment to excellent customer services**
- **Financing and strong funder relationships**
- **Innovative development and regeneration**
- **Accountability and responsibility.**

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## Jill Riley asks the questions...

Jill has been a resident with Cosmopolitan Housing Association (CHA) since 2005 and is passionate about customers being very much at the heart of the organisation; encouraging other residents to get involved and helping us improve our housing and related services.

Here, Jill interviews Maria O'Brien the recently appointed Acting Chair of CHA and Bill Snell, Chair of CHG about the proposal for CDHT to join the Group.



**Why are we considering this now?** We are all aware of what is happening in the economy and we are living in a time of significant cuts in public spending, including housing development grants. We want to do what we can now to protect and improve our services to you whilst also creating more capacity to provide more homes and give residents greater choice. This way, your services are protected.

**Why CDHT?** CHA sees many similarities in how both organisations work and are organised. In addition, both organisations have different strengths and we can learn from each other and improve for the benefit of our residents. Having looked at a number of housing associations based in the North West, we believe we have found the ‘best fit’ in joining forces with CDHT.

**Will anyone be forced to move home because of this?** No. Nobody will have to move because of this proposal.

**Will my rent be affected by this proposal?** No. Your rent will be increased in accordance with government guidelines, as it has been since 2002.

**Is CDHT merging with CHA?** No. CDHT and CHA will remain separate organisations, but CDHT would be part of a new group structure within CHG. This is an exciting opportunity and more than ever, we want residents to have their say regarding these proposals.

**What will happen to the staff we know at CHA?** Staff will continue to work in their current roles.

**Where will our Head Office be?** In Liverpool and there are no plans to alter this.

**Will people lose their jobs?** We hope to have no redundancies as a result of this proposal. Our aim is to create jobs and have a bigger workforce. We may be able to use CDHT’s maintenance arm, TrustWorks, to carry out repairs for our residents.

**Will residents still be able to get involved?** Yes. We really need your feedback and comments on the proposals. We will be encouraging all residents to have their say during a consultation period which started in March with the Residents Communications Group.

**Will any of the rent I pay be used to improve CDHT properties?** No. Your rent monies will be used for reinvestment in services and improvements for CHA residents.

**If residents have a view about this proposal what can they do?** Residents can contact us by phone, email, by logging on to Facebook, by completing the slip attached in this newsletter or by attending one of our consultation events - See page 5. Staff will also visit residents in their homes on request.

**What will you do with any comments you receive back from residents?** We will respond personally to all residents as well as putting a summary of all questions asked along with the response in the next newsletter and on our website.

**Looking at this information, it doesn’t seem as if we will see much difference.** That’s true. Your rights as a resident will remain the same. Your rent will not be affected. You will still use the same offices and we will still be called CHA. What will be different is more opportunity for improved and perhaps additional services plus local opportunities for employment.

**Will the proposal save money?** We currently use KHT Services to provide our repair and maintenance service on our behalf. As part of the proposal, CHA is exploring the use of CDHT’s maintenance arm, TrustWorks. If the proposal goes ahead, this could generate substantial savings and efficiencies which would enable us to improve our homes and front line services. We can spend more on our residents and less on running the business.

**Will there be any changes to CHA's planned improvement programmes e.g. kitchens, bathrooms?** We will continue to deliver the programme of improvements approved by our Repairs Review Team on a five yearly cycle. However, if the proposal goes ahead the savings made could be used to improve this service if it was considered a priority for our residents.

**When will this happen?** A final decision is expected by October this year. There is lots of work for us to do. We will listen to you and take account of what you have to say.

## Consultation

As we move forward with this proposal we will be talking to residents and getting their views. Everyone is invited to attend any of our events (listed overleaf) during March and April. In addition to using the form below, there are many ways you can contact us with your views. You can:

- **Telephone us on 0300 1237062 (Local Rate from Landline or Mobile) or 0151 224 0204 and speak to Debbie, Julie or Ria in the Resident Involvement Team.**
- **E-mail us at [consult@cosmopolitanhousinggroup.co.uk](mailto:consult@cosmopolitanhousinggroup.co.uk)**
- **Contact us on Facebook at Cosmopolitan Housing Association**
- **Come along to one of our consultation events**
- **Ask us to visit you in your own home**

## If you prefer to write in with a question or comment...

Please detach this feedback form or write to us separately. If you would like to receive a personal reply please remember to include your name and address. If you have no objection to us including your question and our answer on our website or in future bulletins (anonymously) please tick the box below.

**Please let us have your comments by 4 weeks from issue - date to be inserted by printer!!!**

Name: ..... Telephone number: .....

Address: ..... Any e-mail address: .....

My question/comment is: .....

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I am happy for my comments to be included on the website or any future news bulletin.

**We will be arranging a meeting with residents and staff from CDHT that will include a tour of CDHT properties - if you would like to come along to this event, please tick the box below:**

I would be interested in attending a visit to/tour of CDHT properties.

**Please return this form to The Resident Involvement Team, Cosmopolitan Housing Association, Cosmopolitan House, 2 Marybone, Liverpool, L3 2BY**

# Consultation Events - coming to your area!

We have set up a Residents' Communications Group with residents from both organisations to set out and agree an ongoing consultation plan and oversee its delivery. This plan will provide opportunities for all our residents to have a say on the proposals. The content of this newsletter has been agreed with the Residents' Communications Group.

We now need to hear your views about the proposal together with any questions or concerns that you may have about this change.

The following informal drop-in sessions and other consultation events will ensure everyone has the opportunity to hear the proposals first-hand from board members, senior management, involved residents and staff. These events will be held across all of the areas within which we own and manage homes; with a variety of timings during the day and early evening to give everyone the best chance to come along.

## The details are as follows:

### Monday 28th March

**Falkner Terrace Car Park**  
Upper Parliament Street  
Liverpool  
L8 7LD  
**10am-12am**

**Fern Lodge Car Park**  
1-5 Sefton Park Road  
Liverpool  
L8 0TH  
**1pm-3pm**

### Wednesday 30th March

**Sefton Park Community Centre**  
Croxteth Drive  
Liverpool  
L17 3AG  
**4pm-6pm**

### Friday 1st April

**Halton Community Centre**  
Whitchurch Way  
Runcorn  
WA7  
**2pm-4pm**



## **Sunday 3rd April**

### **Halewood New Hutte Neighbourhood Centre**

Litchfield Road  
Halewood  
L26 1TT

**1.30pm-3pm**

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## **Monday 4th April**

Visit and tour of CDHT properties with residents from CDHT

**9am-4pm**

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## **Tuesday 5th April**

### **Milman Court**

72 Vale Road  
Woolton  
Liverpool  
L25 7XB

**9am-10am**

### **Olive Mount Tenants' Group Surgery**

Community Centre  
Monkswell Place  
Edgewell Drive  
Liverpool  
L15 8GG

**2pm-4pm**

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## **Wednesday 6th April**

### **Hornby Road Car Park**

Walton  
Liverpool  
L9 3DD

**4pm-6pm**

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## **Monday 11th April**

### **Swan Close**

West Lancashire  
L40 9RX

**2pm-3pm**

### **Leyland Road**

Southport  
PR9 0JL

**3.30pm-4.30pm**

### **Banks Community Centre**

44 Hoole Lane  
Banks  
Southport  
PR9 8BD

**5.30pm-6.30pm**

## **Tuesday 12th April**

### **Vincent Naughton Court**

Rodney Street  
Birkenhead  
Merseyside  
CH41 2ZA

**12.30pm-1.30pm**

### **Rose Court**

26 Parkfield Avenue  
Birkenhead  
Merseyside  
CH41 4FG

**3pm-4pm**

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## **Wednesday 13th April**

### **John Willis House**

28A Chatsworth Road  
Rock Ferry  
Merseyside  
CH42 1NY

**12.30pm-1.30pm**

### **Greenings Court Car Park**

Warrington  
WA2 7GL

**4.30pm-6.30pm**

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## **Tuesday 19th April**

### **St Aidans Court Car Park**

Lindsay Street  
Clockface  
St Helens  
WA9 4YL

**4.30pm-6.30pm**



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[www.cosmopolitanhousing.co.uk](http://www.cosmopolitanhousing.co.uk)