

# YOUR CHOICE

## If the housing remains with the COUNCIL



## If tenants vote "yes" to the transfer and the housing transfers to SPIRE HOMES



<b>Your rent</b>	Rent set in line with government guidelines.	Rent set using the same government guidelines. The added benefit of Spire Homes' guarantee that its maximum annual rent increase would be 50 pence per week less than the Council can promise until target rents are reached.
<b>Housing Benefit</b>	No change - Housing benefit still claimed from, and administered by, the Council.	No change - Housing benefit still claimed from, and administered by, the Council.
<b>Modernisation and improvement works in the first five years</b>	<p>The Council could spend only <b>£3.8 million over five years</b> on a limited programme of works. Works would include:</p> <p><b>New kitchens</b> - around 100 homes.</p> <p><b>New bathrooms</b> - a limited bathroom replacement programme of around 60 homes. The Council could not provide the choices for older tenants of low level shower cubicles or level access showers.</p> <p><b>Windows</b> - around 75 homes would have new high quality double glazed PVCu windows.</p> <p><b>Central heating</b> - heating systems replaced in around 175 homes.</p> <p>A budget of <b>£125,000</b> for new guttering and external decoration.</p> <p><b>No new fencing.</b> The Council would only renew fencing where it has a duty to do so.</p> <p>The Council would not have a budget for improving thermal insulation</p> <p>The Council <b>would not have a budget</b> for additional improvements for sheltered schemes.</p>	<p>Spire Homes would be able to spend <b>£21 million over five years</b> so that homes would exceed the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Works would include:</p> <p><b>New kitchens</b> - all homes where tenants want them.</p> <p><b>New bathrooms</b> - all homes where tenants want them. New bathrooms would include a shower over the bath. Tenants in sheltered and older persons housing would have the added choice of a low level shower cubicle and, for ground floor properties, a level access shower.</p> <p><b>Windows</b> - around 170 homes would have new high quality double glazed PVCu windows.</p> <p><b>Central heating</b> - around 740 homes offered new full gas central heating and boilers replaced when needed.</p> <p>A budget of <b>£1.3 million</b> for new plastic guttering and external decoration.</p> <p><b>£500,000 for new front garden fencing and gates for all homes where practical.</b></p> <p>A programme of thermal insulation offered for all homes</p> <p><b>A range of improvements specifically for sheltered schemes</b>, such as new communal kitchens and bathrooms, redecoration, new doors and improved security.</p>
<b>Environmental improvements</b>	<b>No budget</b> for environmental improvements	<b>A budget of £450,000</b> to improve neighbourhoods and the areas around tenants' homes.
<b>Services</b>	Money diverted from day to day services to help pay for vital and priority repairs.	Services improved and new services introduced, including: <b>A Tenants' Assistance scheme</b> to help eligible tenants with decorating. <b>A handyman service</b> to help tenants carry out minor jobs around the home.
<b>Your rights</b>	Existing tenancy rights continue through your secure tenancy with the Council.	All key rights including your security of tenure would be protected through your new assured tenancy with Spire Homes.
<b>Tenant involvement in decisions</b>	The Council would continue to consult with the Rutland Tenants and Leaseholders Partnership on policy decisions and, as far as possible, on day to day management decisions such as the appointment of contractors and the way that services are delivered.	Tenants would be at the heart of Spire Homes' work and there would be greater opportunity for involvement and influence in decisions. Tenants would be on the Rutland Management Board and Spire Homes main Board to directly influence decisions about the Rutland service. The budget for involving tenants would be increased and a new group of tenants would be set up to plan and monitor the major programme of improvements to your homes.

### LAST MINUTE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

If you receive information which is not from the Council it could be factually inaccurate. Everything the Council sends you is vetted and approved by the Government and external legal advisors. It is also checked by DWA, the independent tenant advisors.

If there's anything that you're not sure about, please call our **freephone 0800 121 6791**.

You can also call DWA, your independent tenant advisor, on **freephone 0800 085 5492**.

# YOUR HOUSING Choice



With news about the possible transfer of our housing to Spire Homes

Issue 5, June 2009



## IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO DECIDE

By Councillor Roger Begy, Leader of Rutland County Council

“ You will have received a number of these newsletters over the last few months. This is the last one before you get to vote on the proposed transfer of the Council's housing to Spire Homes.

The Council is certain that the transfer of homes to a not-for-profit housing association like Spire Homes is the best way to protect and improve your housing service. But it's for you to decide in the ballot.

The main benefits of transfer would be:

- A £21 million modernisation and improvement programme over the first 5 years to bring all homes up to a high standard. And works to maintain those high standards in the coming years too.

- Better housing management services along with new services that Spire Homes would introduce.
- Improvements to the day-to-day repairs service and more money for repairs.
- Your rent would be set in the same way as it would have been with the Council, and you would still be entitled to claim Housing Benefit just as you can now.

- More tenant consultation and more involvement in how your housing service is run.

These promises - set out in the formal Offer Document - are legally binding. The Council will make sure that they are delivered. So please consider the Offer carefully and then have your say in the ballot. ”

## BALLOT STARTS SOON...

**Voting is easy**  
 You will receive your ballot paper in the post very soon. Each secure tenant will receive their own ballot paper.

If you want the transfer to go ahead place a cross (X) in the "yes" box. If you don't want the transfer to go ahead cross the "no" box. Post the form in the pre-paid envelope provided. The ballot is run by Electoral Reform Services.

No one at the Council or Spire Homes will know how individual tenants have voted. The transfer to Spire Homes can only go ahead if a majority of tenants who take part in the ballot vote "yes".

### From the Chair of the Rutland Tenants and Leaseholders Partnership



Tom Coggan of Cottesmore is Chair of the Rutland Tenants and Leaseholders Partnership and a member of the shadow Rutland Management Board. He has been working closely with the Council and Spire Homes on the detail of the transfer proposal.

“ The last few months have been a very busy time for us and I would like to thank everyone who has taken part in the consultation. The Council and Spire Homes have answered all our questions, listened to our views and taken them on board. I believe we have succeeded in building into the Council's Offer Document all the things that are important to us as tenants and leaseholders.

Now we have to decide on the future of our housing service in Rutland in the secret ballot. As the Chair of the RTLP I believe the Council is making us a very good Offer. It protects our rights and our rents and will bring the much needed extra investment into our housing service. So please use your vote. ”

**This is about the future of your home. Please remember to use your vote - don't leave it to others.**

If you don't receive your ballot paper in the next few days please call the Council's freephone helpline on 0800 121 6791.

**...your vote really counts**



John Farrar  
Chairman of Spire Homes

“ We are the housing association that has been managing your housing service for the past three years. We are committed to improving the housing in Rutland and continuing to provide you with quality services for the future. But this can only happen if the majority of tenants vote “yes” in the ballot and the transfer goes ahead.

We are a not-for-profit housing association regulated and monitored by a Government agency called the

Tenant Services Authority. We operate under different financial rules to the Council. We can plan our spending much further ahead and have more to spend. As well as improving homes we will continue to develop the day-to-day management services that are so important. We will retain the best of the Council’s housing service and combine this with financial certainty for the future.”



### Familiar faces

If the transfer goes ahead, you would continue to deal with the people you know, as all of the familiar faces that provide your housing service, including local housing officers and wardens are already employed by Spire Homes. We aim to use the skills and experience of existing staff, and with the extra money available to Spire Homes we will be able to improve services and introduce new ones too.

### Caring for older tenants and those with special needs

Meeting the needs of older tenants and those with special needs is always of great importance to Spire Homes. If transfer goes ahead, we would be able to make the improvements to homes and services that tenants have said are important to them as well as keeping all the things that tenants value.



### Repairs and improvements to your home

We would carry out a major programme of work to bring all 1240 homes up to a modern standard. We would spend £21 million on modernisation and improvements in the first five years.

You would have the choice about whether or not to have a particular improvement carried out, except where this could compromise safety. The choice would be yours!

Once your home has been improved to a high standard we would maintain it at this standard in the future. We will have around £45 million to spend over the next 30 years to do this.



**PLEASE USE YOUR VOTE**

## OUR GUARANTEE TO YOU



### Security for you

We guarantee that as a tenant of Spire Homes you would have security of tenure and the legal right to stay in your home. Your key rights would be protected by a new tenancy agreement and through a legally binding contract between Spire Homes and the Council. We would not be able to change your tenancy conditions without your prior written consent, which is not a right you have with the Council now.



### The Right to Buy your home

We guarantee that if you have the Right to Buy your home at the time of the transfer, you would still be entitled to buy your home from us. You would also keep any discount you have built up before the transfer, and this would continue to increase whilst you are a tenant of Spire Homes.



### Security for your family

We guarantee that your right to pass on your home to your spouse/partner or an eligible member of your family when you die - the right of succession - would remain. Tenants who have already had their tenancy passed on to them before transfer would gain an extra right of succession. This extra right of succession is not available with the Council.



### Improvements to your home

We guarantee to offer you the improvements needed to bring your home to a modern standard, and we guarantee to maintain your home at this standard in the future.



### Rents set in the same way as they are by the Council

We guarantee that your annual rent increases would be set in the same way as with the Council and in accordance with current Government policy. And we guarantee that your maximum annual rent increase will be 50 pence per week less than the Council can promise until the target rent for your home is reached.



### Day-to-day repairs

We guarantee that we will continue to provide a high quality repairs service with a strong appointments system. We will improve the repairs service by offering more ways to report repairs and increasing the budget for day to day repairs.



### Housing Benefit

We guarantee that the transfer would not affect your entitlement to claim Housing Benefit or any other benefit. Any tenant could continue to claim Housing Benefit from the Council, just as they can now.



### Better local services

We guarantee to maintain and build on current services so that we have a housing service that we can all be proud of. We guarantee that we will work with tenants to continuously improve the service and standards of customer care. We will review services with tenants, introduce new services, and make it easier for tenants to contact us.



### Improved sheltered housing

We guarantee that, following consultation with residents, we will carry out improvements to sheltered housing schemes to make them more accessible, comfortable and pleasant places to live.



### A bigger say for tenants

We guarantee that Rutland tenants would be at the heart of decision making with three places for tenants or leaseholders on the Rutland Management Board that will play a key role in overseeing the housing service. We guarantee that we will genuinely involve tenants in the running of the housing service so that we work together to shape and develop services in line with tenants’ priorities. We guarantee that we will provide even more opportunities for tenants to get involved and have their say and will increase the budgets for tenant involvement.



We guarantee that we will keep all the services that older tenants currently value and introduce new services, such as a handyman service and help with decorating. We guarantee that we will provide more support to vulnerable residents.

Please remember, the transfer and the major improvements to homes and services promised by Spire Homes can only go ahead if tenants vote “yes” in the ballot.