

Wednesday 4 October 2017

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

Bring back the National Tenant Voice

Following your comments in Manchester yesterday expressing concern that the views of social housing tenants have not been listened to, we are calling on you to re-establish the National Tenant Voice immediately.

In your interview on Channel 4 News (Tuesday 3 October) you said:

"The voice of social housing tenants doesn't appear to have been heard on too many occasions.

"We have got to find a way to make sure the voice of those people is heard."

The Co-operative Party agrees. There already was a way to make tenants' voices heard until the National Tenant Voice was abolished by the Coalition Government in which you served.

There is justified concern that the tragedy at Grenfell Tower could have been avoided if issues raised by tenants had been listened to. Sentiments that I believe you share.

You have the power to correct this mistake by requiring the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid to bring back the National Tenant Voice immediately. There is no need to wait for the outcome of the Grenfell inquiry.

We also ask that you place a new statutory duty on the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to publicly respond at least twice a year to issues raised by the National Tenant Voice.



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the co-operative party

The new National Tenant Voice should have a mandate to:

- Represent the interests of tenants in England to the government, regulator and other public bodies
- Identify issues of concern to social tenants across the country, identifying trends and emerging problems, and ensuring they are raised with government locally and nationally
- Consider how government policy on housing and other relevant areas, from benefits to building regulations, impact on social tenants
- Supporting the tenants' movement to grow by identifying and sharing good practice in empowering tenants

The National Tenant Voice should be established as a mutual with individual tenants, tenant and resident associations, tenant management organisations and housing co-operatives as members. It should have democratic structures that ensure it is accountable to and representative of its members.

In addition, you should also consider steps to support the development of the UK's co-operative housing sector, given that tenant voice is an intrinsic characteristic of these and other alternative ownership models.

We urge you to respond urgently to this call for action, which is supported by the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, TAROE and the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations. The President of the Chartered Institute of Housing, Alison Inman has also recently spoken in favour.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gareth Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gareth Thomas MP

Chair, The Co-operative Party