

On the whole, it's been relatively quiet insofar as contact with government is concerned, Brexit appeared to have taken over everything – it was almost as if the political world was on a prolonged period of purdah! Suffice to say, inasmuch as the main 3 party's manifestos were making similar promises (increase the number of new homes built), there were differences on the balance between private and social housing

In a joint ARCH, National Federation of ALMO's (NFA), & Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) report last year, referencing Government's lifting of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) ARCH chief executive John Bibby commented:

"Government should be applauded for the decision to lift the HRA borrowing caps in the 2018 Autumn Budget and this report clearly shows that this decision has enabled councils to begin to provide much needed affordable rented homes for local people. But more can and should be done."

"This report highlights some of the remaining constraints on local authorities and we hope very much that the new government will act quickly to remove those constraints to allow councils to deliver the new generation of council housing for those who need it."

"We recognise that home ownership is a genuine aspiration for many, but it is not the answer for everyone and in many areas of the country house prices and rents in the private rented sector are unaffordable to those on modest incomes. The Government's Housing White Paper of February 2017 recognised that the housing market is broken, and the Prime Minister said in his New Year's Message that he wants to "unite & level up" the country. If he is to achieve this, then we need to fix the broken housing market and stock retained councils must be allowed to play their full part in doing so by building more council housing where this is necessary to meet local housing needs". The full report can be found here - <http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/LA%20New%20Build%20Report%20Jan20.pdf>

Following the elections at the end of last year, ARCH has sought to meet with current housing minister to keep issues raised in the Social Housing Green Paper 'on the table' - so to speak

In discussions, loan sharks appears to becoming a hot top, more information can be found here <http://www.stoploansharks.co.uk/who-we-are/>.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is proposing changes in their scheme:

they aim to process referrals within 3 to 4 months.

to be more proactive on best practice, increase subscription rates levy to £2.16 per property.

They further propose:

- Landlords will be required to provide information relating to referral within a set time period
- The service will advise landlords on their complaints processes, e.g. number of stages
- They may find maladministration if there is evidence of complaint handling failure, regardless of resolution outcome
- The service will act as a 'whistle-blower', reporting 'serious detriment' failures to the regulator

Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Phase 1 of the inquiry report was published on 30th October 2019. It was critical of London Fire Brigade preparations, particularly their insistence on pursuing the 'stay put' policy rather than planning an earlier evacuation.

Phase 2 began on 27 JANUARY 2020 and remarkably, *firms involved in the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower have asked the public inquiry into the fire for a guarantee that anything they say in the hearings will not be used for any prosecution.* (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51296935>)

CONFERENCE REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Overall the response of Tenant Group members was positive, with positive views expressed about the programme. The formal feedback was also positive, with over 80% satisfied.

Attendance was down on previous years, only 77 delegates and few organisations represented

Location was an issue, both getting to and from Bridlington

ARCH CONFERENCE 2020

Provisionally the dates for the 2020 conference are booked. Stevenage and Birmingham have put themselves forward as hosts.

SEE THE PERSON National Campaign

Just like other groups, See the Person has also suffered from 'political cold shoulders' due to 'Brexit – *its is*' Having said that, members are doing all the can to raise the campaign profile locally.

The new campaign website is now live <https://seetheperson.org>; <https://seetheperson.org/campaign/>. Various roadshows are being planned to further raise the profile of the campaign and there is also a press pack, designed to inform the press so their reporting is a truer reflection on social housing.