

# Mole Valley Housing Association Transfer Promises December 2011 Update

## Where did we start?

Mole Valley Housing Association (MVHA) was formed in October 2007 and is part of Circle (formerly Circle Anglia), one of the largest providers of affordable housing in the UK. We own and manage around 3,800 rented homes and properties that were previously owned by Mole Valley District Council. We also own more than 350 leasehold properties.

When the housing was transferred to MVHA, we made a number of transfer promises to tenants, including a range of improvements to homes and services. There are 51 promises in all, but we wanted to update you on the promises that are most important to you.

## How have we done so far?

We promised	Our progress
To spend £1 million in the first two years following transfer and £150,000 per annum each year after to carry out <b>adaptations</b> to homes for people with disabilities.	We have already invested over £1 million on aids and adaptations. We have completed works to 350 properties and have over 150 jobs planned. Works have included ramps, stair lifts and walk in showers to name but a few.
Within five years of transfer all homes that need them will have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A modern, fully efficient <b>central heating</b> system</li> <li>○ A modern <b>kitchen and bathroom</b></li> <li>○ Improved <b>insulation</b> to modern standards</li> <li>○ UPVC double glazing to <b>windows and doors</b></li> <li>○ <b>Electrical rewiring</b></li> </ul>	We have developed and delivered a planned programme of works that will ensure that all your homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard ahead of our deadline at the end of 2012. So far, we have provided around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1,200 kitchens</li> <li>○ 1,350 bathrooms</li> <li>○ 1,800 electrical rewires or upgrades</li> <li>○ 1,000 heating systems,</li> </ul> together with a wide range of other improvements.
To have a budget of £4 million in its business plan to bring <b>non-traditional homes</b> (post-war pre-cast concrete temporary housing) up to a modern standard.	We have begun working with residents in Middlemead, Bookham, on proposals for bringing non-traditional homes up to modern standards. Other homes in Capel are to be refurbished and consultation will commence with residents of Westcott in early 2012.
To set future <b>rents</b> according to Government policy, and in line with this, limit annual increases to inflation plus 0.5% (+ £2 per week where residents' rent is less than target rent).	We have continued to ensure that rent increases have been no more than inflation + 0.5% + £2 per week, in line with Government policy.
To ensure that there are no hidden <b>service charges</b> and that tenants will only be charged for the services they receive.	We have a thorough process in place to ensure service charges are correct. Every tenant receives a quarterly rent statement which provides a breakdown of their services charges.
To introduce a <b>decorating scheme</b> , free of charge, to pensioners and those with disabilities.	We piloted this scheme last year and are expanding it during 2011/12. To date 106 rooms have been decorated.
To work with tenants regarding the introduction of a <b>gardening service</b> .	We have worked with residents to agree a set of criteria for the service. We launched the service in April 2011 and have assisted over 60 residents to date.
To provide improved services to <b>sheltered housing</b> , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintaining a <b>meals service</b></li> <li>○ Additional <b>storage for wheelchairs</b> and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We have maintained the meals service.</li> <li>○ Every scheme has been surveyed and designated scooter storage areas agreed with appropriate charging facilities installed.</li> </ul>

We promised	Our progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o scooters</li> <li>o Thermostatic <b>radiator valves</b> will be fitted</li> <li>o Funding for <b>social activities</b></li> <li>o <b>Cyclical decoration</b> of communal areas</li> <li>o Improved <b>communal rooms and furniture</b></li> <li>o Improved <b>laundry facilities</b></li> <li>o A programme to <b>convert some bed sits</b> into one bedroom flats</li> <li>o <b>Lifts and stair lifts</b> will be installed</li> <li>o Improved <b>door entry security</b> and control</li> <li>o Improved <b>guest rooms with en-suite facilities</b> where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Residents have a choice of lever or normal taps and thermostatic radiator valves have been fitted.</li> <li>o Funding has been provided for social activities which has been used by residents for catering, furniture, coach trips and games, to name but a few.</li> <li>o Every communal room and corridor have been redecorated in full consultation with residents.</li> <li>o We have maintained the high standard of laundry facilities at all schemes and put in non-slip flooring and wall mounted ironing boards.</li> <li>o Planning permission is being sought to convert studios to one bed flats in Norfolk Court and plans are under consideration to do this at three other schemes.</li> <li>o Planned works are ongoing and include lifts, stair lifts and door entry security. We consider other specific requirements on an individual basis.</li> <li>o 11 of 17 schemes have guest rooms with en-suite facilities and a further four are planned.</li> </ul>
<p>To encourage and increase <b>tenant involvement and community development.</b></p>	<p>Residents are involved at MVHA and support our work in many ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The MVHA Board</li> <li>o Resident Involvement Group (RIG)</li> <li>o Leasehold Forum</li> <li>o Mystery shoppers</li> <li>o Resident inspectors</li> </ul> <p>We have increased the staff involved in community development and have provided a budget of £100k per year for five years to support community development work. Examples of our work are the Dreamscheme Project which included youth activities all over the district, as well as the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) project where we have worked with minority groups to improve their understanding of the English language.</p>
<p>To look to deliver 300 <b>affordable homes</b> in the area in the first five years after transfer.</p>	<p>As expected, this has proven to be a challenging area for us as we have had to identify suitable land, gain planning permission and deal with the economic downturn. However, we have completed 59 affordable homes so far and, with Circle's support, have the funding in place to help achieve our target, but over a longer period.</p>
<p>Introduce an <b>appointment system</b> for all non-urgent repairs.</p>	<p>An appointment system has been in place since stock transfer. We now offer extra appointments on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings.</p>
<p>With you, to regularly <b>review the way in which we deliver our services.</b></p>	<p>We actively encourage and involve residents in the review of our services. This year a resident team inspected our customer services and we have made changes as a result. Residents are also monitoring our work around anti-social behaviour, standards for home improvements and when we relet our homes. The next area of focus is estate inspections.</p>

**There are other promises too; and here is how we are doing against those:**

We promised	Our progress
MVHA would continue to ensure <b>access to an emergency alarm service</b> , providing peace of mind to many older and disabled tenants, 24 hours a day, throughout the year.	We have continued to provide a 24 hour emergency alarm service through the council since transfer. More recently, we have moved the service to Invicta Telecare, a part in the Circle Group.
<b>Assistance with moving to smaller accommodation</b> would be strengthened and a named officer provided to assist with individual tenants with practical help with making arrangements to deal with the task of moving.	We have continued to provide assistance as we did prior to stock transfer. We have made some enhancements to the services which have included more assistance being provided and named officers.
MVHA would aim <b>to continuously improve on the standards of service</b> it provides with a commitment to a "right first time" ethos.	We have many ways of monitoring performance at MVHA. This includes involving residents to ensure we hear first hand how we are doing. Examples include monitoring groups, mystery shoppers, the Board, resident inspectors and the Resident Involvement Group. We regularly survey our residents following repair works and they have said that over 83% of our repairs are completed at the first visit.
The <b>existing housing management</b> staff, that tenants know, will transfer to MVHA with a commitment to deliver the improved services and standards.	Existing staff transferred to MVHA after stock transfer. We have also increased the number of staff in key areas, including a Head of Community Development, Community Development Officer, two Community Wardens and a Handyman.
We will transfer the <b>existing repairs service</b> to MVHA and introduce a new four hour response target for emergency repairs.	The in-house repairs team transferred along with the rest of the staff. Performance of the team has improved over time and a four hour emergency repairs service has been implemented.
We will spend £1.1 million on <b>fencing</b> installations and replacements.	So far we have managed to complete works to 450 fences. We are a bit behind schedule but have a full programme of works for the next year and have already completed works to over 80 properties in 2011/12.
MVHA will provide <b>improved security</b> which will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Improved lighting</li> <li>o Mobile CCTV</li> </ul>	We have provided lighting in all areas that were identified prior to transfer and are considering future requests as they arise. Our mobile CCTV unit is in place.
We will introduce a <b>handyperson service</b> .	We recruited a handyperson shortly after stock transfer and the service is available to all tenants.
We will introduce a <b>Mobile Housing Service</b> across the district.	We completed a pilot scheme for one year after transfer however this proved not to be popular with residents so did not become permanent after the trial period.
MVHA will <b>replace</b> existing <b>analogue aerials</b> with digital aerial by the 2012 deadline.	We have installed over 1,500 aerial points in residents' homes. The works have cost us a bit more than originally planned but we are on track to complete the works by the end of 2011/12.
MVHA will introduce a <b>loft conversion programme</b> to allow those tenants who are over-occupying their homes to apply for an additional bedroom to be added to their property, if possible to do so.	We have completed three loft conversions to date. Interest from residents has been lower than expected and some of the existing property designs make it difficult to convert/install a loft conversion.
MVHA will introduce a <b>community skip service</b> to allow residents to dispose of bulky items.	The service was successfully trialled free of charge during 2008/09 however residents were concerned about future costs, and who was able to use the service. We considered providing tailored services but the costs were too high thus we didn't pursue this.

We promised	Our progress
MVHA would continue to make available to tenants a <b>home contents insurance scheme</b> along the same lines as the one available through the Council.	Residents are able to take advantage of the Norwich Union scheme. We have negotiated cover at competitive rates and residents are able to receive enhanced standards at “platinum” level.
<b>Antisocial behaviour will be a priority</b> for MVHA.	MVHA signed up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management in 2008. We have also introduced a community warden service and actively work with the council and the police to deal with antisocial behaviour cases. We also produced a new Local Offer related to anti social behaviour in April 2011 in partnership with residents.
<b>Improved lighting, play facilities, car parking and environmental works</b> could be carried out following more detailed consultation with tenants about what they want to see for their area. MVHA’s business plan has set aside £1m for such works (£100k p.a. for 10 years following transfer).	We have provided lighting in all areas that were identified prior to transfer and are considering future requests as they arise. We have also developed a play area at The Oaks and are looking at proposals to do some ground works at Goodwyns Estate.
MVHA would consult tenants of flats and sheltered housing schemes about the grass cutting and <b>grounds maintenance service</b> they receive and would consider their suggestions for improving these services.	We have worked with residents to introduce new cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts from April 2011. These services have saved us money but are still able to deliver a better standard of service.
MVHA will provide <b>external storage facilities</b> on estates for communal wheelie bins and recycling facilities, as necessary.	This is being considered as part of the planned programme where possible to minimise inconvenience to residents and save on costs. This is a difficult area for us and we are currently reviewing some legal considerations at present.
MVHA will provide all transferring tenants with a <b>new tenancy agreement</b> , ensuring that their key rights are protected.	The new tenancy agreement was delivered to all transferring tenants in May 2008. All transferring tenants received a new Right of Succession.
MVHA would charge all new tenants the <b>target rent</b> for their home from the start of their tenancy, plus any service charge that was applicable.	New tenants are charged target rent as promised.
MVHA will consult with residents around introducing a <b>Tenants Reward Scheme</b> .	We consulted with tenants on this but they were not in support of such a scheme.
MVHA will introduce a <b>tenant resource centre</b> for tenant participation activities.	There is a tenant resource centre at MVHA’s Regent House office which is being used by residents.
MVHA will work with the council to establish <b>local lettings plans</b> for the allocation of new homes.	Local lettings plans or priority nominations agreements have been created and implemented for all our new developments.
MVHA would have “ <b>open membership</b> ”. All tenants would be able to apply to become a member of MVHA by completing an application form and paying £1 for membership.	We have offered open membership to tenants. Following transfer, over 60 residents signed up and became open members.
MVHA would provide <b>funding for tenant participation</b> including tenant groups and for sheltered housing schemes.	Every year hold a resident involvement action planning day where we work with residents to agree priorities for the year ahead. We have an annual budget which we use to try and deliver against those priorities.
There would continue to be only <b>one rent rise per year</b> .	There has continued to be only one rent increase per year.
<b>At the time of transfer, each tenant would pay the same rent</b> to MVHA that they were paying to the Council.	There was no change to rents to existing tenants at the time of transfer.

We promised	Our progress
MVHA would positively seek to increase the number of ways in which tenants can make <b>rent payments</b> to their rent account.	Tenants are able to pay rents in a number of ways, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Payments at post offices</li> <li>○ Direct debit</li> <li>○ Cheque</li> <li>○ Standing order</li> <li>○ Payments at MVHA office</li> <li>○ Payment of the phone via debit/credit cards</li> <li>○ Payments via the Internet via debit/credit cards</li> </ul>
MVHA would continue to offer a discount for any tenant who pays their rent using <b>Direct Debit</b> and who does not fall into arrears.	We offered the discount to tenants when we transferred. We have since consulted with tenants to change this to a one off incentive payment (in line with the rest of Circle).
MVHA would introduce a <b>customer services team</b> .	MVHA introduced a customer services team following transfer.
MVHA would also have a <b>budget for ‘catch up’ repairs</b> , as well as future improvements.	This is included as part of the repairs budget and has been in place since transfer.
All housing <b>staff would work from offices within the district</b> .	All staff work within the district and the head office is based in Dorking.
There would be a full programme of <b>staff training</b> .	Staff are encouraged to take part in training opportunities and are able to take advantage of a full suite of training courses offered by the Circle.
MVHA would have a <b>customer care and complaints policy</b> and an officer responsible for making sure all comments and complaints are replied to and dealt with.	A customer care and complaints policy is in place. We have also employed an officer who is responsible for coordinating the complaints process.
MVHA would provide <b>funding for an annual local event/conference</b> .	We provide the funding for a residents’ conference during the first year following transfer. Since then we have worked with the Resident Involvement Group (RIG) to agree funding for public events.
MVHA would provide <b>mentoring and training for tenant representatives and future potential Board members</b> .	We have an annual training programme for residents and agree the budget for this with RIG every year. Unfortunately, the attendance for these training events has not been as well attended over the years as we would have liked.
<b>6 of the 15 places on the Board would be held by residents</b> .	The Board includes 6 residents, 5 of whom are tenants and 1 of whom is a leaseholder.
MVHA would consider future requests from groups of <b>tenants who wanted to have more involvement in the management of their area or estate</b> .	To date we have had no requests from any such groups. We do however actively encourage residents to join our numerous groups so we are able to understand their views on our services.
MVHA would carry out a range of <b>satisfaction surveys</b> on a regular basis designed to make sure that the service is meeting your needs.	MVHA has a suite of satisfaction surveys that are independently undertaken on a monthly and quarterly basis. The results of the surveys are used to improve the services we provide to residents.
MVHA would participate in the <b>HOMESWAP Scheme</b> that helps people to move to Council or housing association homes outside the district.	We are no longer a member of the Homeswap scheme as we have joined Circle’s scheme, called House Exchange. We have over 140 residents who are active members of the scheme. Since transfer we have facilitated over 70 management moves.

**Who can provide more information about the promises?**

Should you require further information or an update against all 51 promises, please contact:

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