

AmicusHorizon and Viridian Housing - amalgamation proposal

Together Better



Please read this leaflet as it includes more information about our plans for forming a partnership with another housing association - Viridian Housing. You may remember we told you about this in June and invited you to a meeting to find out more.

This leaflet tells you about a further proposal. We're still on course to form the partnership with Viridian in January / February 2017 but soon after that, both associations propose to amalgamate to form a single, new housing association.

Questions you may have

What happened to the proposal to form a partnership with Viridian?

We consulted residents in the summer and received 79 responses of which 12 were negative or raised concerns about the proposed partnership. These included:

- Whether a larger organisation would lead to deterioration in service quality. Staff were able to use the example of how seven small associations amalgamating in 2009 to create AmicusHorizon led to improvements in service quality and resident satisfaction.
- Concerns the partnership would create a 'super region' in London which would dominate the Group and its resources, possibly to the detriment of Kent and Sussex residents. Staff said resources for repairs and maintenance will be allocated across the regions to ensure all homes meet the required standards. Both associations are committed to Resident Panels and scrutiny so residents will be able to check and challenge how money is spent.

Residents liked the partnership's commitment to:

- Social purpose
- Continuing social housing
- Building additional new homes.

So we're carrying on with that proposal and both associations hope to receive approval from the Social Housing Regulator (the Homes & Communities Agency) early in the new year. When this goes ahead, the two associations will keep their existing names and be legally linked together in a 'group'. Together we'll have over 44,000 homes and be one of the UK's largest housing groups.

What is the additional proposal?

After the partnership starts we'd both like to merge together to form one, new housing association. This would be done using a legal process called 'amalgamation'.

What is amalgamation?

An amalgamation means the two organisations merge into one housing association. The assets and liabilities of AmicusHorizon and Viridian would transfer into the new organisation.

The new organisation would have a new name, which has not yet been decided. It would be a housing association and a registered provider of social housing just as AmicusHorizon is now. It would be regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency and subject to the same rules and regulations which govern all housing associations.

Why do this?

In our summer consultation about the proposed partnership, we explained why AmicusHorizon's Board thought a partnership with Viridian would bring benefits including:

- The joint ability to build more homes to help with the UK's housing crisis.
- Working more efficiently to make savings.

Viridian provides a brilliant 'match' with AmicusHorizon. They have similar values and the same things are important to them. Like us, Viridian has been committed to providing high quality social housing for decades. Delivering great customer service is central to their way of thinking which mirrors our own approach.

Creating one housing association by amalgamating would help us to work more efficiently, reduce costs even further, so freeing up money to build more homes and provide great services.

What would be the benefits to residents?

You'd be part of a larger organisation offering you lots of opportunities. AmicusHorizon is committed to making sure residents' voices are heard and listened to. This won't change in the proposed new housing association as Viridian also believes resident scrutiny is important. The opportunities for residents to get involved in shaping services would continue and you'd be able to choose to participate in a number of ways.

The new housing association would have formal structures for residents to influence how we operate including resident panels. Or, you could choose to get involved more informally through mystery shopping, completing a survey or joining a discussion or online forum.

The new association would be financially strong and able to increase the number of new homes built. The partnership already plans to build at least 1400 new homes each year from 2020. Our priority would be homes for affordable rent and low cost home ownership.

If it proceeds, forming one housing association through amalgamation would enable us to reduce costs further to invest in even more homes than those already planned respectfully by AmicusHorizon and Viridian.

Would my tenancy agreement/lease change?

No. Your tenancy agreement or your lease (if you are a shared owner or leaseholder) would not be affected in any way. All that would change would be the name of your landlord

Would my rent and service charge change?

No. Rents and service charges would not be affected by the proposal and they would continue to be subject to government policy as they are now. Rents for shared owners would continue to be set in line with the lease.

What about repairs?

At present our repairs satisfaction is very high. The proposed association would continue to deliver a responsive and efficient service as we know this is really important to you.

What changes would tenants/ shared owners see?

The amalgamation would create a new organisation which would be your new landlord. The name of the organisation has yet to be decided but we would let you know before a new name is adopted.

Would my rights be affected?

The amalgamation would not affect your rights as a tenant or shared owner. The new organisation would be bound by the terms of your tenancy agreement or lease in the same way as we are now as your current landlord.

Nor would the change affect any existing statutory rights you have. If you currently have the right to buy (either the preserved right to buy or a contractual right to buy), that right would continue unaffected.

Will residents vote on the proposal to amalgamate with Viridian Housing?

This leaflet is part of how AmicusHorizon is consulting residents on the proposal. There's no vote or ballot but we do want to know what you think of the idea and give you an opportunity to give us your views.

When would an amalgamation take place?

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, we're hoping to receive all approvals and for AmicusHorizon's and Viridian's Boards to make a final decision by the end of February 2017. If it proceeds, we hope the new housing association will form in April 2017.

We'll keep you informed of how we're progressing with information on our website, Facebook and in our resident newsletter.

It's time to let us know what you think !

This is your chance to have your say and to ask any questions you may have. The Homes & Communities Agency requires us to consult with you and will want to see residents' views on the proposal.

How can I give my feedback and have a say on this proposal?

We'd really like to know what you think about our plans to amalgamate with Viridian Housing to form a single, new housing association. You can let us know your views by emailing us at:

contactus@amicushorizon.org.uk
Or **calling 0800 121 60 60**

For more information please visit
www.amicushorizon.org.uk

We're also holding a series of open meetings for residents to come along and ask senior staff about the proposal.

London

Grosvenor House, 125 High Street,
Croydon CR0 9 XP
Thursday 12 January, 6pm – 7.30pm

Kent

The meeting room, Regis Gate, Attlee Way,
Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, ME10 2HB
Thursday 19 January, 6pm – 7.30pm

Sussex

The Watch Oak, Chain Lane,
Battle TN33 0YA
Tuesday 10 January, 6pm – 7.30pm.

**To reserve a place at these meetings please call:
0800 121 60 60**

Our consultation period ends **5pm, Monday 23 January 2017**. So please get any comments or queries to us by then.

