



The Leasehold Advisory Service

2019-20 Business Plan

March 2019

Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square
London
EC4Y 8JX

1.0 Chair's Foreword

- 1.1 I am pleased to present The Leasehold Advisory Service's (LEASE) Business Plan for 2019-20.
- 1.2 LEASE provides support and advice for leaseholders across England and Wales and is accountable to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Welsh Government (WG) for the use of resources and performance.
- 1.3 The advice we provide is initial legal advice that empowers our customers to make informed decisions and to engage more confidently with third parties like freeholders. Leasehold and park homes law is complicated, so we understand that our customers need our help to understand how the law affects them and delivered in an empathetic way.
- 1.5 In 2018, MHCLG undertook a review to consider how successfully the existing landscape of support, advice and dispute resolution delivers for current and prospective leaseholders, and determine any changes necessary to ensure the needs of consumers are met in the evolving legislative and regulatory environment. It did this by:
1. Establishing the advice, support, dispute resolution and consumer championing needed by current and prospective leaseholders.
 2. Establishing the current provision for leaseholders.
 3. Identifying gaps and shortfalls in current provision and opportunities for improvement or streamlining; and
 4. Making recommendations to Ministers on how to fill identified gaps or make improvements.
- Inevitably, the role and performance of LEASE was a primary focus, but I am very pleased with the continuing confidence that has been shown in us by MHCLG and WG to improve the quality of service we provide to leaseholders.
- 1.6 I have no doubt that 2019-20 will be a challenging year for LEASE whilst we implement change for the benefit of leaseholders and park home owners across England and Wales, but in making these changes we will play our part in improving the landscape that supports them.

Wanda Goldwag
Chair

2.0 About LEASE

- 2.1 LEASE was established in 1994 as a private company limited by guarantee. Over time, and with both an expansion of remit and change of name, we became an Executive Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) in 2005. We provide independent, impartial, initial legal
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advice for the benefit of leasehold park home owners on the complex areas of law that affect them. The majority of funding is grant in aid from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). We also receive some funding from the Welsh Government (WG). The MHCLG funding includes grant-in-aid during 2019-20 for LEASE to provide advice and support to leaseholders in high rise buildings on fire safety issues.

2.2 LEASE is accountable to MHCLG for the use of resources and performance. The relationship is set out in a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum that operate as framework documents and monthly meetings attended by LEASE and MHCLG officials are held to review performance, risks and the use of financial and other resources. LEASE reports quarterly to the Welsh Government on its performance against the objectives set for the year.

2.3 LEASE's Board's responsibilities are to provide leadership and strategic direction and supervise the overall management of LEASE activities. The Board has two sub-committees:

- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, with three non-executive members, which reviews the completeness, reliability and integrity of the assurance framework and advises the Accounting Officer and the Board; and
- Remuneration Committee, with two non-executive members, which determines pay and related matters, reviews performance appraisal frameworks and assists in the recruitment of senior staff.

3.0 Vision, Mission and Values

3.1 **Our vision** is for LEASE to be trusted and universally acknowledged as the 'go to' source for free high quality and impartial leasehold and park home advice.

3.2 **Our mission** is to empower leaseholders and park home owners through initial advice and information to engage more confidently with third parties like freeholders and site owners.

3.3 We will meet the challenges of our mission through services that include:

- A website containing leasehold and park homes advice, guides, podcasts, webinars and First-tier-tribunal (Property Chamber) decisions, and Welsh specific guidance.
 - Leasehold, park homes and fire safety outreach work across England and Wales, including attendance at MP, Assembly Member and councillor surgeries when requested to provide advice and workshops.
 - Specialist leasehold and park homes helpline and written advice service
 - Dedicated webpage, helpline and other services to ensure that leaseholders in high rise buildings with fire safety issues including Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding are aware of their rights and are supported to understand the terms of their leases.
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- Collaborating with, and supporting other organisations, to provide assistance to leaseholders and park home owners.
- Assisting MHCLG, WG and others on leasehold and park home policy issues.

3.4 We will perform our duties:

- ***On a pro-leaseholder and park home owner basis*** - acting for/representing the interests of leaseholders & park home owners.
- ***Independently*** – function impartially, apolitical and arm’s length from government.
- ***With quality*** - provide a professional service to our customers and keep high standards as a constant aspect of our service delivery.
- ***Accessibly*** – deliver services and in a way that makes them as accessible as we can for customers and in every way we can.

4.0 Leasehold and Park Homes background

Leasehold

- 4.1 Leasehold is a form of property tenure that has existed for centuries in England and Wales. MHCLG estimates that there are 4.3 million leasehold properties in England alone. Currently, leasehold remains widely used as a means to flat ownership, and continues to grow in spite of an alternative to leasehold being available since 2003 – namely, Commonhold.
- 4.2 Leasehold is a landlord/tenant relationship, which by its very nature is an uneven playing field between the parties. It is regrettably common for disputes to arise, and they can range across a number of issues. An added factor is that the tenure includes landlords from the social and private sector, both of which include those more vulnerable owners (e.g. the retirement sector).
- 4.3 Over a number of decades, legislation has sought to address the imbalance of rights and responsibilities between leaseholder and freeholder bearing in mind each of their interests in the property, and with a view to preventing abuses from occurring and promoting good management. This has resulted in a large amount of specific and complex legislation, but also efforts to self-regulate the sector. However, the latter approach is no longer viable as poor practices have stubbornly continued.
- 4.4 It is because of the imbalance, and this includes knowledge about rights and obligations, that it is important for the empowering of leaseholders with information to create a level playing field. This, combined with working with other organisations that support leaseholders, is the core to bringing about greater fairness for leaseholders. It follows that LEASE is key to ensuring leaseholders have high quality free advice and information.
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Park Homes

- 4.5 There are an estimated 180,000 people living in 85,000 household across 2,000 sites in England
- 4.6 In Wales, 5,000 people's full time residence is a park home; and they live in 2,000 such households spread across 92 sites.
- 4.6 **England:** The Mobile Homes Act 1983 extended the rights of mobile home residents, particularly in respect of security of tenure. The Coalition Government published 'A better deal for mobile home owners' on 16 April 2012. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee conducted an inquiry into the park homes industry and published its report, Park Homes, in June 2012. The Committee found "widespread malpractice" in the sector and concluded that the existing legislative framework was "inadequate".

The Mobile Homes Act 2013 implemented many of the proposals contained in 'A better deal for mobile home owners' and recommendations made by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee in Park Homes. In addition, LEASE's remit was extended to provide free information and advice to "owners of mobile homes, site owners, local authority officers or anyone else with a question about the law on park homes".

- 4.7 **Wales:** The Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013 gained Royal Assent on 4 November 2013. The stated purpose of the Act is to establish a licensing regime for mobile home sites in Wales and to make further provision in relation to the management of such sites and the agreements under which mobile homes are stationed on them.
- 4.8 It follows that with devolution, there are now similar frameworks between England and Wales, but sufficient points of distinction that, like leasehold, setting out the statutory duties and rights that create a complicated picture. A small number of solicitors and other organisations provide advice to fee-paying members or as a fee-paying service. Hence, here too LEASE is key to ensuring residents have high quality free advice and information.

5.0 Operational context

- 5.1 This plan has been developed against an operating environment that includes the following:
- MHCLG has completed the first phase of its review of advice and support to leaseholders in England. During 2019-20, LEASE will implement the recommendations in the review such that LEASE can better meet the needs of leaseholders and park home owners now, and as consumer focused change comes increasingly to bear on the ownership of leasehold and park home property in the future.
 - LEASE holds a tremendous amount of data related to customer enquiries. Analysis, and publication, of that data can be used to not only inform generally, but also assist policymakers.
 - The Law Commission, in its recent Right to Manage consultation, thinks that many prospective directors of RTM companies would benefit from specific training covering
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the basics of the responsibilities of an RTM company director. However, it proposes that training should be strongly encouraged, and well publicised, but not mandatory.

- LEASE's work is aligned with MHCLG's objective to "Make the vision of a place you call home a reality". MHCLG intends to make this happen through a range of activities including work to "Reform the leasehold market so it is fairer and more transparent, and provides greater choice for home-owners".

Those reforms are:

- Capping ground rent in the future;
 - Reinvigorating Commonhold (Law Commission project);
 - Ending the use of leasehold on new build houses in the future, save in exceptional circumstances;
 - Improving the home buying and selling process;
 - Regulating managing agents, including the need for professional qualifications;
 - Making the process of purchasing a freehold or extending the lease of a flat or house much easier, faster and cheaper. (Law Commission project); and
 - Making the Right to Manage work better for leaseholders (Law Commission project)
- The number of leasehold properties is growing and this means an outlook of more leaseholders needing advice, information and support for problems they experience; but also to educate and inform them on the new rights and changes to the sector in the years ahead.
 - MHCLG's Park Homes Working Group (PHWG) supports the implementation of the government response to the review of mobile homes legislation. PHWG objectives are to raise awareness about mobile home residents' rights and obligations; streamline and improve the processes for selling mobile homes, making site rules and carrying out pitch fee reviews; and improve the standards of rented park homes.
 - The ongoing priority of Government to control public spending and increase efficiency.

6.0 LEASE's Priorities for 2019-20

6.1 LEASE's Board has agreed its priorities for 2019-20, supported by indicators and target metrics to provide a clear measure of performance. These are set out below.

1. Deliver high quality advice with high standards of customer service to leaseholders and park home owners.
 2. Implement the recommendations of MHCLG's Review of Advice and Support for leaseholders' in England.
 3. Support leaseholders in high rise buildings with fire safety issues including Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding.
 4. Participating in/implementing recommendations of Park Homes Working Group
 5. Use LEASE's data, knowledge and insight to inform the sector about the issues our customers bring to us.
 6. Raise awareness of LEASE's Fire safety and general services.
 7. Make LEASE an excellent opportunity for all our staff to develop their careers.
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Objective 1: Deliver high quality advice with high standards of customer service to leaseholders and park home owners	KPIs	Metrics
<p>We will do this by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review next batch of advice guides under 'Plain English' principles. 2. Developing and implementing a content strategy. 3. Maintain LEASE's website for convenient customer use. 4. Rostering LEASE advisers to support leaseholders by telephone helpline, written advice and outreach channels every working day. 5. Employing high standards in customer service 6. Engaging other advice providers with a view to growing their capacity to assist their local leasehold advice provision. 7. Improving the IT function at LEASE 8. Launch LEASE's online E-Learning modules by 15 July 2019. 9. Maintaining awareness of the leasehold and park home policy environments and support the reform agenda through participation in workshops, working groups and responding to Government and other associated consultations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage Plain English Campaign to undertake review. 2. Develop and implement a content strategy; and train advisers on drafting content from LEASE's audience. 3. (a) Number of UK visits to the LEASE website and (b) downloads of online materials 4. (a) Number of enquiries addressed by LEASE advisers (b) Turnaround for written enquiries within specified time (c) Telephone enquiries addressed within specified time (d) Number of outreach events held (e) Outreach events arranged within specified time 5. Customer satisfaction surveys for advice by telephone in writing and face –to-face (including outreach) show high satisfaction rating. 6. Identify local hotspots of leasehold enquiries and engage with local advice providers eg Citizens Advice Bureaux 7. Recruit an apprentice to support the IT function at LEASE 8. Number of leaseholders or RTM/RMC Directors that register for e-learning. 9. Support workshops, working groups and respond to Government and other associated consultations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete review and upload revised guides by 30th June 2019. 2. Content strategy by 30th May 2019; and train advisers on drafting content from LEASE's audience by 30th June 2019. 3. (a) Achieve 825,000 advice guide downloads by 31 March 2020; and (b) Achieve 850,000 FAQ downloads by 31st March 2020 4. (a) Complete 25,000 enquiries in England by 31st March 2020 (b) Address 75% of written enquiries within 10 working days (c) Hold phone advice sessions within two working days of customer requesting calls (d) Hold 40 leasehold and park home outreach events in England (e) Arrange outreach events within 10 working days of request 5. Achieve an average of 4.5 out of 5 in customer satisfaction surveys (telephone, written and outreach) 6. Assist three local advice providers to grow their capacity by 31st March 2020. 7. Complete recruitment of apprentice by 30th April 8. 100 leaseholders or RTM/RMC Directors that register for e-learning. 9. Participate in workshops, working groups and respond to Government and other associated consultations seeking to improve fairness through reform for leaseholders and park home owners.

Objective 2: Implement the recommendations of MHCLG's Review of Advice and Support for leaseholders in England	KPIs	Metrics
<p>We will do this by: Working with MHCLG to develop an improvement plan for LEASE</p>	<p>Develop and implement an improvement plan.</p>	<p>Develop and implement improvement plan by 30th April 2019</p>

Objective 3: Support leaseholders in high rise buildings with fire safety issues including Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding.	KPIs	Metrics
<p>We will do this by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updating and improving LEASE's fire safety content. 2. Rostering LEASE advisers for the fire safety service via telephone, written advice and outreach channels every working day in order to meet service agreement with the Building Safety Programme. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (a) Number of UK visits to the fire safety page; and (b) Number of UK page views to the fire safety pages 2. Number of enquiries addressed by LEASE advisers 3. High ratings in customer satisfaction surveys for advice by telephone, in writing and face-to-face (including outreach) 4. Turnaround for written enquiries within specified time 5. Telephone enquiries addressed within specified time 6. Number of outreach events held 7. Outreach events arranged within specified time 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (a) Achieve 100,000 visits to the fire safety page; and (b) Achieve 120,000 page views for the fire safety pages by 31st March 2020 2. Average 120 enquiries per month by 31st March 2020 3. Achieve an average of 4.5 out of 5 in customer satisfaction surveys (telephone, written and outreach) by 31st March 2020 4. Address 75% of written enquiries within 10 working days 5. Hold telephone advice sessions within two working days of customer requesting call. 6. Hold 15 outreach sessions by 31st March 2020 7. Arrange outreach events within 10 working days of request.

Objective 4: Participating in/implementing recommendations of Park Homes Working Group	KPIs	Metrics
<p>We will do this by: Improving communication of rights and responsibilities for Park Home Owners.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewing/updating information and guidance to ensure LEASE is central source (and signpost destination) for comprehensive, up-to-date, accurate information for the park homes sector; 2. Provide information through a number of channels to take account of park home resident age group, and the different stages of the “customer journey” 3. Review/improve stakeholder engagement/communications to maximise dissemination of information 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review content on the Park Home web pages by 30th May 2019; and improve the Park Homes pages by 15th May 2019. 2. Map customer journey for Park Homes and survey to be carried out of all Park Homes customers to ascertain channel preference and whether we can provide additional services by 30th May 2019. 3. Review existing key stakeholders and approach to engagement by 30th May 2019.

Objective 5: Use LEASE’s data, knowledge and insight to inform the sector about the issues our customers bring to us.	KPIs	Metrics
<p>We will do this by: Implementing Project ‘Open Door’</p>	<p>Publish LEASE’s enquiry data quarterly throughout 2019-20.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a data page on the LEASE website and release data by 2nd April 2019. 2. Publish data for the preceding quarter by 20th July and 20th October 2019; and by 20th January and 20th April 2020.

Objective 6: Raise awareness of LEASE's services for leaseholders in high rise buildings with ACM- cladding and general services.	KPIs	Metrics
<p>We will do this by: Developing and implementing a communications strategy.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit a staff member for a communications role at LEASE. 2. Increase our reach and improve engagement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete recruitment by 30th April 2019. 2. (a) Publish 30 articles online by 31st March 2020 and sign post to LEASE as an advice source where relevant articles appear in the media (b) grow followers on social media by 50% by 31st March 2020; and (c) Maintain LEASE's high search engine ranking.

Objective 7: Make LEASE an excellent opportunity for all our staff to develop their careers	KPIs	Metrics
<p>We will do this by: Aiming high in recruiting, developing, motivating and recognising all LEASE staff to create an excellent service and internal culture.</p>	<p>Results equivalent to leading government departments' achievements under the Civil Service People Survey.</p>	<p>By 31st March 2020 achieve staff survey results equivalent to the top five government departments.</p>

7.0 Resources

Financial

- 7.1 LEASE is funded by grant-in-aid provided by MHCLG and WG, and our financial aim is to break even over the course of the year. We recognise the need to show value for money and we are keen to ensure that the approach to the management of resources and assets is always strategic, comprehensive, and linked to achieving strategic objectives. LEASE gives consideration (and takes action) to optimise value for money in all the activities we carry out.
- 7.2 Due consideration is given to minimising the costs of all resources used, whilst having continual regard to quality. LEASE monitors various KPIs to ensure that objectives are achieved and that LEASE remains an effective organisation.

	2019-20 ('000)
Income	
MHCLG	1,860
WG	52
Total income	1,912
Expenditure	
Pay	1,370
Operating costs	532
Capital Expenditure	10
Total expenditure	1,912

Personnel

- 7.3 LEASE employs 22 full time equivalent staff, made up principally of legally qualified advisers. Of these, two are to support the fire safety service. The Annex to this plan sets out the intended organisational structure in 2019-20. This indicates a rise to 24 FTE during 2019-20, based on us recruiting an apprentice to support our IT services and a communications assistant to improve LEASE's external communications.
- 7.4 LEASE is committed to fair and open competition and selection on merit. We promote equality of opportunity for all staff irrespective of their race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion. We also seek to provide effective and appropriate learning and development opportunities to help all staff fulfil their individual and team potential.

7.5 We recognise that LEASE is an attractive platform for those who are beginning their legal careers. As such we expect them to come and develop excellent specialist knowledge, and in that way we can help to propel advisers to the next phase of their careers.

7.6 For all our staff, LEASE will continue to support and recognise the importance of the reasonable work life balance aspirations. We are committed to the continual development of staff thereby ensuring a fit for purpose organisation, and we view the annual staff survey as a vital tool in this regard.

8.0 Key risks

8.1 Our key risks are as follows:

- *Lack of engagement with other organisations in the advice sector results in lack of support available to leaseholders and leaseholders not receiving timely advice – we will manage this risk through the implementation of a communication strategy and through it engagement with the wider advice sector both to learn and to explore partnering to grow their capacity to help leaseholders.*
- *Poor project management delays Project Open Door and undermines the sector's knowledge of the current and emerging issues raised by leaseholders and hinders policy and other developments to address them – we will manage this risk through the application of good project management fundamentals and the provision of both qualitative and quantitative data.*
- *Risk of poor outcomes for leaseholders through failure to manage changes to implement recommendations arising from MHCLG's review of advice and support for leaseholders and park home owners – we will manage this risk by implementing improvement with the assistance of MHCLG and ensure that the organisation has the capacity and/or support to manage change.*

Annex

