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Following our meeting in July this year and more recently ahead of the launch of the Government's Housing Strategy, I am writing to you about the voluntary offer on greater transparency within the housing association sector, which we discussed at both those meetings. I know that my officials have also raised this with NHF colleagues.

As you know, I have repeatedly urged the sector to keep pace with the Government's own actions on transparency and bring forward a robust voluntary offer on how best to increase transparency for the benefit of tenants and others. You will also remember that I made this point at the Federation's annual conference in September 2010. I am disappointed that 15 months later only one offer has come forward from the G15 group and nothing from the National Housing Federation.

Since the Government came to power over 18 months ago it has led the way on giving the public greater access to its accounts and expenditure. We believe that this in turn, allows the taxpayer to scrutinise our activities and challenge us to find greater efficiencies. As you know, I firmly believe that all bodies – be they public or private – that receive significant amounts of public funding should be more transparent and more open to scrutiny. As well as being right in principle, there are also significant benefits to greater transparency, including improved efficiency and better-informed scrutiny by tenants. This makes sound economic and business sense – it is a good discipline to consider how expenditure decisions will be perceived by customers and the wider public.

I know that we share the same objective which is to do all that we can to deliver increasingly higher quality services to tenants whilst finding greater efficiency and providing value for money. I am therefore keen to see the sector bring forward a comprehensive offer on transparency as soon as possible. This is particularly important given the forthcoming consultation on Freedom of Information, which, if implemented, will bring Housing Associations into the FOI regime. My officials stand ready to work with you and your team on what a voluntary offer on transparency might look like and I hope you will feel able to take this up.

Given the clear public interest in this issue, I am publishing this letter.

GRANT SHAPPS MP