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Eighth time lucky? Housing gets another Minister

Written by Roisin Buckley on 20 July 2018



The turbulent fallout from the Chequers meet has concluded (for now) and there is a fresh face at MHCLG in the form of Kit Malthouse, the new housing minister.

Malthouse will have a tough task re-establishing industry confidence in a role that has seen four different ministers in the last two years.

A relative newcomer, having been elected in 2015, Malthouse can at least be reassured that his predecessor, Dominic Raab, was hardly a dazzling success. It's possible Raab's most memorable moment was his appointment itself - widely seen as a snub that enabled May to keep a leadership competitor on a leash and, vitally, outside of Cabinet.

Raab did not do much to dispel this impression, partaking in a high-profile interview with the *Sunday Times* a couple of months into the job, where he raised housing and immigration figures that were subsequently found to be highly dubious. Fewer interviews were given after that, and none on the intricacies of assured short hold tenancies. A housing enthusiast Raab was not.

Having been plucked from the relative obscurity of a junior position at the DWP, Malthouse can at least point to an extensive local-government CV to bolster his credentials. His stint as Deputy Major

for Policing under Boris Johnson should stand him in good stead to take on one of the more intransigent issues concerning the country. Similarly, his eight years on Westminster Council (though not without controversy) will mean he is at least familiar with the bread-and-butter aspects of his brief.

And Malthouse will certainly need to hit the ground running - the key issues facing him are manifold.

Raab moves off having managed to swerve the publication of the social housing white paper, leaving that neatly in the in-tray of his successor. The white paper, announced after the Grenfell tragedy, was originally scheduled for release in early 2018, then pushed back to spring, and now 'before recess'. It remains to be seen if it will actually appear later this month.

The highly anticipated National Planning Policy Framework is also due at some point before the house rises for summer, and focus will be needed on rough sleeping - the number of people on our streets is rising, despite the Government commitment to eliminate rough sleeping altogether by 2027.

Research by Knight Frank found that 86 per cent of housebuilders believe construction of 250,000 additional homes a year is the maximum achievable amount by 2022, yet the Government has committed to a target of 300,000 new builds. The Tenant Fees Bill, now at Report stage in Parliament, will also need attention.

On a positive note, Malthouse seemed enthused by his appointment. That may well take him far - if not in policy terms, it could at least mean some much-needed continuity for the housing brief.

[Communities, housing and planning](#) ^[1]

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