

MIDLANDS REGION ALMOs CHIEF OFFICERS MEETING
Notes of meeting 20 May 2014
CIH Head Office, Octavia House, Coventry

1. Welcome and apologies

Present

Rebecca Rance (Chair)	Newark and Sherwood Homes
Kelly Scott	Ashfield Homes
Nick Murphy	Nottingham City Homes
Steve Boyd	Solihull Community Housing
Maria Murphy	Derby City Homes
Sue Adams	Shropshire Town and Rural Housing
Mark Henderson	Wolverhampton Homes
Eamon McGoldrick	NFA
Joanne Kent-Smith	NFA

Apologies

Dale Robertson	Northampton Partnership Homes
Lesley Roberts	Wolverhampton Homes

2. Notes of last meeting 21 January 2014

- 2.1. Steve Boyd updated the group on action point 10.2 in relation to collection of water rates, advising conversation with Severn Trent confirmed that they are not setting up any new agreements or contracts at the moment due to forthcoming changes regarding universal credit.
- 2.2. Steve also updated the group on action point 10.3 with discussions with the local LEP.
- 2.3. The group agreed the minutes to be a true representation of the January meeting.

3. NFA Business Plan update

- 3.1. Eamon presented the business plan update, and highlighted key areas of activity. Including campaigning work on borrowing caps, and the scaling back of borrowing rules. Eamon confirmed a meeting with ESG members and the independent Housing Reviewer had been set up. ALMOs to provide any examples of new build models to Chloe for inclusion in discussion. Kelly and Maria advised the group they had submitted responses to the enquiry directly and would provide Chloe with a copy.
- 3.2. Eamon advised results of the 2nd welfare reform survey due for publication early June 2014, and the group discussed regional variations and differences in LA application and approach to DHP.
- 3.3. Eamon confirmed the NFA continues to build on the successful meeting with Housing Minister Kris Hopkins in January, and thanked Becky for hosting the visit at Newark and Sherwood Homes.

3.4. Eamon advised the group that the NFA will be hosting fridge events at each of the three party conferences 2014.

3.5. Work continues around establishing strategic alliances with an excellent meeting recently with PlaceShapers, and further thinking around the relationship and possible partnership with ARCH.

Action	Who	Timescale	Update
Examples of new build models to inform discussion with Housing Reviewer	All ALMOs	24 May	NFA submission sent in May 2014 and meeting arranged with ESG and the review Team on 10 June 2014.

4. Communications Strategy Action Plan

4.1. Eamon presented the updated Communications Strategy Action Plan and advised that following the deletion of the NFA Communications Sub-committee the Communications Officers meeting will become the primary communications route with ALMOs. Eamon confirmed the last meeting was well attended and urged ALMOs to ensure their Press and Comms Officers attended.

4.2. The group also discussed the current NFA website, and views on password protecting documents for members only, with a view to making ALMO briefings and publications more widely available to non members.

4.3. It was noted that the group felt that the current approach to communications is not sufficient or reflective of a modern communications service.

5. Governance and Managing Agent Contract Review

5.1. Eamon presented the paper and highlighted the recommendations for each review as itemised in each of the two appendices. It was also noted that a decision needed to be made as to who would represent the Midlands region at Board.

5.2. The group comprehensively discussed the issue that we currently have only one tenant member on Board, and succession planning needs to be given some thought. It was agreed to include as a discussion item at the Board and ESG Away Day.

5.3. The group also discussed current arrangements of the ALMOs Chairs meetings and the possibility of making arrangements more formal than at present, though the Chair clarified these should not be serviced by the managing agent.

Action	Who	Timescale	Update
Becky agreed to liaise with Lesley to determine who would represent the	Becky	June 2014	Agreed that Lesley will represent the region for one year then

Midlands region at Board and advise the Managing Agent.			Becky will take over. Becky will deputise in the event Lesley is unable to attend any meetings.
All ALMOs to discuss with their Chairs the future shape of Chairs Meetings	All	Sept 2014	Agenda item on September meeting

5.4. Eamon presented the key points of the Managing Agent Contract review and timescale for review to be completed by end of 2014, with decisions to be made in the autumn to inform 2015 Budget decisions (Including sub-contractors). Eamon advised of discussions with Janet Talman also considered the establishment of a profit sharing arrangement on savings.

5.5. There was also discussion regarding the APPG and concerns around achieving value for money with current arrangements.

6. Independent Housing Review

6.1. Eamon introduced the report and advised that a meeting has been set up with members of ESG in June 2014.

7. Right to Buy and help for purchasers – Kris Hopkins

7.1. Eamon outlined the enquiry by Housing Minister Kris Hopkins regarding the potential for ALMOs to deliver support services to previous RTB owners. The group discussed options and agreed that a range of services could be provided as a means of creating additional surplus. With the potential to off set cost of future services within the RTB discount at point of sale. Views of the group were mixed in relation to the potential risks relating to recovery of repairs costs, and existing providers already operating in the market place such as British Gas.

8. Annual Conference and NFA Awards update

8.1. Eamon presented an update on the 2014 Annual Conference and Awards. The group discussed the programme. There was a positive response to the programme and Nick advised that he had widened out attendance to his senior management team.

8.2. The group were positive about the potential move to the Hilton Hotel Manchester in 2015 which offers improvements around capacity and mobility.

9. Discussion Item – social enterprise

9.1. Mark Henderson led a discussion on venturing into social enterprise. A key issue identified was being able to identify new markets for enterprise that doesn't detract from existing local employment.

- 9.2. Nick advised the group of recent research they had undertaken looking at the return on investment in social enterprise and the impact on the city.
- 9.3. Joanne advised the group that the next New Business, Development and Funding Group meeting will be themed around social enterprise and hosted by Wolverhampton Homes.

10. Research on housing related supportive technology eligibility for HB

- 10.1. Becky informed the group of research completed by supplier Tunstall Technology

11. Update on Shared Services Meeting

- 11.1. Becky updated the group on the shared services meeting, and advised would create a document which summarises what products / services each ALMO is procuring to identify common areas for potential joint procurement. Initial 3 areas identified include; Capita, Customer feedback software, and IT Support Services.
- 11.2. Becky advised a further meeting has been scheduled for July.

12. Regional Round up and bidding

Wolverhampton Homes: Not bidding for funds, still working on relationship with LA to support new build. Wolverhampton LA building homes without grant.
A TMO in the City has issued a right to transfer notice to the LA

Ashfield Homes: the LA is bidding for funding, but the LA does not want the ALMO to build directly. LA new homes will be completed by end of 2014 and ALMO will manage homes. HCA Scheme being developed by the LA includes some extra care units also to be managed by ALMO.

Facilitating IT access for all tenants via Sutton Academy

Awaiting results of SP service tender

Have approval to provide assistive technology services within and outside of district.

Procuring a removal company to support the implementation of downsizing scheme

Shropshire Town and Rural Housing: STAR are project managing the build of 68 units on behalf of the LA, which will be managed by the ALMO once completed.

STAR has not applied for HCA funding due to the implications of the end of rent convergence. Once more year will make a difference so have had discussions with the HCA about submitting a bid at a later date.

STAR is not applying for additional borrowing as cannot afford repayment currently.

Considering procurement of land for future use.

LA has applied for extension of rural designation for RTB but request has been declined.

Currently reviewing all SLAs.

Derby Homes: Not requesting extra borrowing. Has bid jointly with LA for HCA funding for 128 properties, including an extra care scheme. Availability of land is an issue.

Developing 40 properties on pepper pot sites, and have acquired an old LA childrens centre for conversion into flats.

ALMO looking to add housing options, housing advice and homelessness services – staff not TUPE but ALMO currently managing LA staff.

Solihull Community Homes: Experiencing problems with funding bids being filtered through LEP and directed towards Birmingham.

Management Contract has been renewed with some changes to executive management team on a one year rolling programme based on automatic renewal linked to performance. Looking to secure a 12 year contract.

Nottingham City Homes: Joint bid with the LA for HCA funding for 198 properties, and registering for RP status to develop 17 properties using £18k grant which will be owned by the ALMO. Developing houses not flats. First 5 houses build by NCH staff will be complete this month.

Not looking for additional borrowing because of issues with rent convergence.

Newark and Sherwood Homes: Applying for HCA funding and submitted expression of interest for increased borrowing for 2016/17 (to increase head room).

13.A O B

13.1. Housing Ombudsman service: The group were advised to be careful of duplicate billing for ombudsman service with both the ALMO and LA being approach in some circumstances.

13.2. NFA work on ALMO Board and Staff pay: It was agreed this issued should be discussed as part of the away day planned for June

13.3. Next Board Member networking meeting: Scheduled to be hosted by STAR on 6 July 2014

13.4. NFA one day event – Green Agenda 8 September 2014: Eamon promoted the event and advised the green briefing would be launched at this event.

13.5. Energie Sprong: The group discussed the proposals and agreed in principle there is some interest, but the group should maintain a watching brief.

14. Dates of next meeting: Tuesday 16 September 2014 10.30am – 2.30pm. CIH, Octavia House, Coventry.