

National Federation of ALMOs Annual Report 2006

Key NFA activities during the year have included:

- NFA Board members met the Housing Minister in November 2005 and members of the NFA steering group and secretariat have had regular contact with senior ODPM officials on both operational matters and on the ODPM review of the long term future of ALMOs. The ODPM has established a separate team to take forward the review work.
- The NFA successfully argued for local authorities to be given the discretion to delegate to ALMOs the ability to apply for anti-social behaviour orders and an ODPM consultation paper proposing an extension of the ASBO function has been published.
- In response to an approach by the NFA, the ODPM agreed to amend the PFI guidance to enable ALMOs to be part of a PFI consortium for new build schemes.
- The joint NFA/CIH/HouseMark report *ALMOs – a new future for council housing* which sets out proposals for longer term financial freedoms outside the Housing Revenue Account subsidy regime has been published in both shortened form and in a longer, more technical document that is available as a website version only.
- In June 2005 the NFA published *Making a Difference: Good News from ALMOs* which highlights ALMO initiatives.
- After consulting its members the NFA has instituted its own Support Framework for twinning high performing ALMOs with new and aspirant ALMOs and those that may be experiencing problems achieving a two star inspection rating. This facility is now being rolled out to individual ALMOs on request.
- Membership of the NFA has increased to 69 ALMOs or local authorities establishing ALMOs, including those hoping to go into round 6 of the programme.
- The NFA launched a new website in April 2006 offering a number of additional features.

NFA events

The following events were all well attended:

- Two regional seminars for Board members on *Setting the Future Vision*.
- One seminar specifically for new and aspirant ALMOs.
- Two regional seminars on the next challenges for ALMOs.
- Three workshops for ALMO and local authority officers to jointly discuss the implications of the NFA/CIH/HouseMark proposals for financial freedoms.
- A workshop for officers on completing the building cost model.

In the wider world

- The ODPM published guidance on payment for Board members and issued a paper on the Support Framework.
- The government's response to the Barker review included a proposal to consult on allowing local authorities with ALMOs the flexibility to use their own resources (including land) to build and own homes.

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On the ALMO front

- In June 2005 the ODPM announced ten successful bids, involving nine new authorities, in round 5 of the programme. Details of round 6 are expected to be announced in May 2006.
- The ODPM also announced the first Efficiency Challenge Fund Grants awards. Procurement networks involving ALMOs in London, the Midlands and the North have been amongst the first trailblazers under this scheme.
- Round 3 ALMOs had an across the board 2% cut imposed on their second tranche allocations except for one ALMO whose allocation was increased to cover works to stock taken out of a PFI scheme. Round 4 ALMOs are likely to be similarly treated.
- Twelve new ALMOs went live during the course of 2005.
- Several of the earlier ALMOs have now reached the decency standard in the whole of their stock with Ashfield Homes the first ALMO to achieve this feat.
- Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing and Derby Homes were the first ALMOs to negotiate an extension of their management contract with their local authorities.
- Hounslow Homes is expected to be the first to build new ALMO homes later in the year.
- Performance indicator data collected by HouseMark shows improved housing management performance by ALMOs for the third year in a row with tenant satisfaction levels overall exceeding those in both the traditional local authority and housing association sectors.
- As at March 2006 44 ALMOs have been inspected or re-inspected with 10x3*, 29x2*, 4x1* and 1x0* ratings.
- Three out of four authorities awarded beacon status for *Improving services by involving tenants* have ALMOs.

Key tasks for 2006 will include:

- Lobbying the government to institute financial and operational freedoms for ALMOs and publish the results of the ODPM review of the long term future of ALMOs.
- Developing a marketing strategy to publicise the successes and strengths of the ALMO movement and launching an all party parliamentary ALMOs group.
- Submissions to the 2007 Comprehensive Spending review and the Labour Party's National Policy Forum working party on the future of social housing.

About the NFA

The NFA was established on 1 April 2003. It is the representative body for ALMOs and supports the development of aspirant ALMOs. The objectives of the NFA include:

- Securing a long term financial future for ALMOs
- Persuading government to take account of the interests of ALMOs
- Establishing a vibrant and innovative ALMOs sector that will:
 - provide decent homes
 - raise standards across the public rented housing sector
 - achieve excellence in service provision
 - promote tenant empowerment
 - help to deliver broader national and local policy priorities.

The NFA is a not-for-profit organisation and income received from subscriptions and events, less costs reasonably incurred, is invested in providing services to its members. Membership is open to ALMOs and to local authorities setting up or interested in exploring the ALMO option. The NFA is administered by the Housing Quality Network Ltd and overseen by a Board of ALMOs and an officer level steering group.