

## West North West homes Leeds – ALMO Annual Review

### **Governance:**

We have made no changes to our formal governance structures during 08/09. At our Annual General Meeting in 2008 a new chair and vice chair were appointed to the Board and we had the resignation of a tenant board Director. A replacement has now been appointed under the casual vacancies arrangements within our constitution. As part of our internal audit arrangements a Governance Audit was undertaken in the later part of the 2008/09 and this reported Moderate Assurance. Since November 2008 our Board has increased the frequency of meetings which are now held monthly.

We received an Audit Commission housing inspection in September 2008 and achieved a 1 star with promising prospects for improvements rating. This was an enhancement to the mock inspection findings we had received in November 2007 and demonstrated the change management work the organisation had undertaken since the early days of the ALMO merger, although it was still a big disappointment not to receive our 2 stars 'good' service ambition. The strengths and weaknesses found within the organisation, as identified by Inspectors, are well reported within the Audit Commission's Report issued in January 2009. WNWhL put up a robust response to some of the Inspector's findings but a decision of the Board was not to contend the score but move forward and place our energies into further improvement and to be confident of an improved result at re-inspection which is now scheduled to take place in the two weeks commencing 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

We have identified the need to strengthen the skills of Directors and Managers within the organisation to ensure the delivery of the challenges ahead. These challenges include our ability to successfully manage change, tackle underperformance, accelerate pace, and heighten standards towards excellence. For Directors this has been in the form of training and development sessions facilitated by Anthony Collins Solicitors, Zurich Risk Management and staff presentations. For Managers emphasis was placed on coaching for performance, leadership and management skills and exploring how the culture of the organisation could be shaped to promote its values and achieve its objectives. Following an extensive Leadership and Management development programme, we have developed a range of corporate cross cutting projects (Void Management, Gas Safety, Delivering decency, Business Continuity & RESPECT agenda).

In preparation for September 2008 a large number of reviews took place. These included a comprehensive review of our service standards, strategy and policy documents and service level agreements. Perhaps the most critical review of all took place in November/December 2008 when the organisation reviewed its policy and resources related to meeting the decent homes target.

We have also pursued further developments in delivering excellent value for money; we have developed a Value for Money toolkit and workbook. Service Improvement Groups were established in early 2008 and continued to meet throughout 2008/09. Their key role being to focus on service improvement actions. Each Service Improvement Group is complemented by a Customer Sounding Board, an important vehicle for tenant and leaseholder consultation. The number of Strategic Key Lines of Enquiry(KLOE) Groups increased to cover Cohesion and Diversity, Asset Management, Access to Services, Tenancy, Estate Management and Lettings, Customer Involvement and Value for Money. Our Directors participate in governing and guiding service improvement through Strategic KLOE Boards and our Board Champion Framework.

We commenced a review of all our Human Resource strategies and delivered over 750 training events, which have benefited 81% of our staff complement. We have initiated attendance at work enhancements and implemented a comprehensive staff reward and recognition scheme with awards judged by a cross panel of company stakeholders including customers, Board Directors and staff themselves.

### **Business Plan:**

The vision for the Company: ***“to excel in delivering homes and services which are relevant to our customers, meet their aspirations and enhance communities”***,

The Critical Issues facing WNWhL in 2008/09 were identified as:

- Audit Commission Inspection 2008 – *this has now been concluded with a 1 star promising prospects rating*
- The financial model shows a revenue operating deficit of £2.3million in 2008/09 – *this has been improved upon with a £2.1m pre-audited out-turn deficit at year end.*

- Current financial projections suggest that, from 2011, WNWHL will no longer be able to financially sustain itself. – *The Futures Review has now been initiated by LCC and WNWHL have a viable revenue projection to the end of our Management Agreement Term 2013.*
- To attain 100% annual gas servicing and gas safety check to reflect legal requirements – *improvements have been achieved and we can now demonstrate top quartile performance in gas servicing performance and controls. Some system improvements still required.*
- Revised Management Agreement and Performance Management Framework have been reissued and are being renegotiated with Strategic Landlord: amendments include the provision for FRS17 Pension liabilities – *we have agreed the Performance Framework with LCC and re-worked assumptions to reduce FRS17 liabilities. These require sign off by Mercers and external auditors BDO Stoy Hayward.*
- Potential Industrial Action in respect of 2008/9 Pay Award – Trade Unions rejected 2.45% offered and balloting for industrial action – *Pay settlement was achieved without major disruption to services or business.*
- Our Performance Management Framework is under review at operational level to incorporate local performance data – *the performance system has been enhanced and there are now local performance indicators set for every service area of the business*

The actions it identified for 2009/10

- WNWHL will review local lettings policies to ensure where possible the allocation of the limited housing supply best fits the needs of the most vulnerable and at risk and matches the demand profile of communities in our geographic area. **Review completed**
- We will improve the management and service delivery of the sheltered housing service, if we are successful in winning the tender. We will identify outdated schemes for renewal or redevelopment. **An option appraisal led by the Board and involving support from internal audit decided not to tender for the service and handover to a new provider is scheduled for March 2010. WNWHL to play an important role in selecting the replacement provider.**
- We will contribute to the regeneration of West and North West Leeds by working in partnership with the Council and other strategic bodies on specific programmes, including the West Leeds Gateway, the Little London PFI scheme and Fairfield's Northern Challenge Bid. **This is ongoing partnership work which has been reported to the Board at frequent intervals.**
- We will align available resources to strategic priorities and particularly focus on actions that improve the health, well being, safety and cohesion of communities and neighbourhoods in West North West Leeds. **See later sections on performance. In 2008/09 over £0.5m of expenditure was delegated for Area Panel prioritisation.**
- We will ensure that decisions made on the use of capital resources, deployed through the capital investment programme, reflects a sustainable future for social housing in West North West Leeds by taking into account the projected housing needs analysis. **Review completed. See Decent Homes Section.**
- Through the service review, focus activity and tenancy management resources to improve the support given to the elderly, the most vulnerable and at risk tenants and tenancies. **Review complete and Tenancy Support Team established from within existing resources.**
- We will use our Customer Profile data to compare the current provision of social housing in West North West Leeds to the diverse needs of all its customers and communities. This will take into account housing needs specific to multicultural and faith community groupings, the elderly, the disabled, the vulnerable and those most at risk. It will use the analysis to inform its asset management strategy and the how it spends the capital resources at its disposal. **Examples of use of customer profile to determine business decisions in evidence through Board Reports.**

A comprehensive review of our 2008 Business Plan is currently underway in preparation for the revised 2009 plan to be submitted to the Council at the end of June 2009.

At the start of the financial year the company revenue budget was refocused so that the dependence on short term windfall SCA monies to fund fixed cost expenditure was reduced. An operating deficit of £2.3m was identified and a number of budget reductions were negotiated with budget holders to achieve savings in line with the £1m savings requested by the Board of Directors. The repairs partnership struggled to achieve the efficiencies originally sought, and in some cases, benchmarked costs were higher than we wished and this was linked to inherited terms and condition costs of operatives employed on one of our contracts. An action plan to drive further efficiencies and internal management controls was put in place. Our outturn revenue operating position has a pre-audited out-turn £2.1m deficit.

Our Capital Resources of £53m have all been committed and although a final outturn position is awaited the capital budget has been carefully monitored and managed and we anticipate coming in on budget on close down of accounts for the 08/09 year.

## **Performance and Performance Management**

At the year end 2008/09 our performance highlights the following when compared to the other Leeds ALMO and Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation.

- We are the highest performer in 3 of 16 indicators these relate to former tenant debt and % of tenants with Notice served.
- We are the second best performers in 6 of 16 indicators
- We are third performer in 5 of 16 indicators
- We are lowest performer in 0 of 16 indicators

(At the time of writing performance on 2 indicators was still to be reported and compared – decency and SAP ratings). We have 3 indicators demonstrating top quartile performance (% of Notices served, average time taken to complete non-urgent repairs and % of urgent repairs completed to time) and one in lower quartile (rent collection)

At points during the year performance in empty property management and re-let times deteriorated significantly. However actions to remedy operational and process weaknesses regained performance and we ended the year as the city's second best performer with a performance of 1.44% of stock untenanted against a target of 1.25%.

Income Management remains our main area of concern, with lowering collection rates and higher arrears forecast. Performance in the latter part of the year improved but we still have a challenge to move out of lower quartile position relating to the collection of rent. Plans for additional promotional campaigns and support from our Welfare Advice Workers and Citizens Advice Bureau worker are essential to taking both a proactive and interventionist approach to working with customers who are experiencing difficulties against the backdrop of an economic downturn and increased level of unemployment within our customer groups.

Over the year a key internal target relating to complaints handling performance has significantly improved to 78%. The number of complaints received during the year has reduced and we revised our complaints policy to include a more challenging 10 day turnaround target. Call handling performance within Customers Services Leeds has improved with the exception of being still under target on call waiting times. We have developed proposals for a contact centre support project team. This team could support the Customer Services Leeds team and build the capacity for calls to be answered quickly and answer queries at first point of contact.

Since May last year the Board have routinely scrutinised gas servicing and maintenance performance. Subsequently controls and performance has significantly improved. WNWhL now manage the contract directly and we employ internal audit to verify performance and systems every quarter. Our Tenancy Enforcement and Tenancy Support Teams identify any tenancies that require early intervention and pre-service checks for vulnerable customers.

We Implemented the HUB Case Management system to improve our ability to record and monitor how we deal with Anti-social behaviour and estate environment cases. The Anit Social Behaviour Reporting element is due to be operational from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009

### **Capital Programme and Decency:**

We have delivered a massive £53m programme of investment works this year and attain customer satisfaction of over 97%.

Our non-decency position entering the New Year was 25.33%. In November 2008 we re-prioritised our capital resources and scheme commitments for the remainder of the financial year. Also Property Management Services confirmed that they would only be able to offer a commitment to deliver capital schemes for us for the 2009/10 financial year. Non-decency position mid year was 24.4% and we ended the year at a non-decency position of 18.7% against a target of 18.6%.

We continue to have multiple capital investment needs across a high proportion of our stock which are over and above the decency definition. The organisation used its extensive stock condition information to identify that we have over 700 properties still in need of an investment plus approach to meet customer expectations and improve living conditions. These works predominantly feature within our system built housing stock.

### **Diversity:**

Following the initial results of the Equality Standard level 4 standard, we prioritised 22 specific actions for implementation around: leadership, monitoring, consultation, employment and access to services. We started development of our Diversity Performance Framework and targets for the company. 294 staff had undertaken the Grassroots Diversity Workbook exercises, with 302 completing it by mid year.

Domestic Violence, Community Safety, Child Protection and Vulnerability Strategies and Policies were all put in place.

Following the launch of our Tenancy Support Team we developed a Network Sharing Agreement with Support Providers to ensure partnership working around supporting vulnerable tenants. An evaluation of the Tenancy Support Team was undertaken at the end of the year which demonstrated the effectiveness of the team. From customer profiling, in November 2008 we identified that an average of around 17% of our customer could be in need of specific support services and we have identified a huge largely unmet demand. At its 6 month review in November the team had received approaching 300 referrals.

We achieved just over 80% of Customer profile data. This is from less than 30% at the start of the year. We set up a Diversity Staff Group to develop initiatives, one of which was the Diversity Fashion Show Event held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2009 which was a sell-out. The number of Equality Impact Assessments we undertook against our new policy framework was 32. By the end of the year we have been assessed by the Council's Equality Unit as achieving Equality Level standard 4, and Domestic Violence levels 1 & 2. We have also received the Diversity 2 ticks award. The Domestic Violence Performance Framework was reviewed by Diversity KLOE Board and we entered into a partnership with Leeds Ahead to develop our corporate social responsibility approaches. Over 30 of our staff have signed up to Volunteering schemes this has included work to support community activities such as Christmas Parties for older people within our communities, a reading mentoring partnership scheme with Kirkstall Valley Primary School and a mentoring scheme supporting Year 10/11 students in local high schools..

### **Resident Satisfaction:**

We are very proud of the fact that we have the highest level of customer satisfaction in the city. A recent survey undertaken placed our overall Customer Satisfaction Level at 73% but our own STATUS Survey run in 2008 showed 78% satisfaction and had a much larger survey sample size. The 2008 Strategic Landlord BME survey, based on a small sample of face to face interviews, placed resident satisfaction at 74.3%

The Board approved a strategy and methodology for the collection of, frequency of carrying out and reporting of customer satisfaction holistically across the business and by individual service area. Our current survey highlights the following individual service area satisfaction levels.

### **Satisfaction Surveys**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>% satisfied</b>	<b>Date Surveyed</b>
Repairs	<b>98.10%</b>	Feb-09
Access to Services (Housing Office Survey)	<b>96.7%</b>	Mar-09
Adaptations	<b>92.31%</b>	Jan-09
Income Management	<b>92.51%</b>	Jul-08
Multi Storey Flats Cleaning & Caretaking	<b>70%</b>	Jun-08
Planned Maintenance	<b>88%</b>	Jan-09
Tenant Involvement	<b>92.80%</b>	Aug-08
Empty Properties	<b>94%</b>	Mar-09
Complaints	<b>73.40%</b>	Mar-09
Improving Homes	<b>87%</b>	Aug-08
West Yorkshire Strategic Partnership Alliance – Home Improvements	<b>97.40%</b>	Mar-09
Environmental	<b>75%</b>	Feb-09

We applied for the Customer Service Excellence Standard Mark pre-assessment and have developed an action plan to apply for accreditation in September 2009. We reviewed and streamlined the Area Panel bidding process which enables customers to submit their own bids for Tenants Association work, community safety, environmental projects or enhancements to communal areas.

Work commenced with COMPAS@TPAS (Tenants Participatory Advice Service) to undertake a Quality Assessment of our Resident Involvement services and with Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing Peer Mentoring to undertake best practice/ development sessions with Board members and Area Panels. We introduced a Customer Involvement Audit Trail to record and measure resident involvement been undertaken throughout the Company and the impact residents have had in influencing our services. It will also help us identify value for money. During the year we launched our 3 local Area Panel Community Partnership Agreements. We received TPAS accreditation for our Tenant Involvement work in September. This is pegged above a 3 star mark and we were the first ALMO nationally to receive the award. The new Customer Involvement Network Executive Committee (a monitoring and consultative group comprising representatives of Tenant & Resident Associations, Area Representatives, Disabled, Sheltered, Leasehold and BME Forums and young tenants) were elected in September 2008.

Our work with Young People in particular the Fairfields Dreamscheme was successful in achieving 2 community and City Pride Awards