

Housing Management/ALMO Review summary of stakeholder feedback

- **ALMO Boards and Chief Executives**

A formal joint submission was made to the review team which has been considered throughout the review. The submission from the ALMOs advocates the retention of an arms-length arrangement with a local delivery structure – therefore of the two options recommended for further consideration option 2 would be preferred.

- **Environment and Neighbourhoods, LCC**

A formal joint submission was made to the review team which has been considered throughout the review. The advocates the integration of the ALMO functions into direct council control, retaining a strong local delivery structure based on existing arrangements. Council services would be integrated with wider ALMO functions, allowing housing management teams to focus only on core activities to ensure tenants receive the best possible service.

There were a number of similarities between the submissions received, but some clear differences. These have been summarised below:

Joint ALMO Submission	Environment & Neighbourhoods Submission
Continue with three locally based housing management delivery teams that mirror existing ALMO arrangements reporting to a single Chief Executive and Board. This would minimise impact on frontline housing services and allow services to remain locally responsive.	
A single governance structure	
Some form of Housing Board	
Active involvement of tenants and independents in the decision making processes	
Mixed delivery repairs and maintenance services	
Greater clarity in decision making	
Reduced duplication	
Delivery of efficiencies	
The management of anti-social behaviour continues to be undertaken through existing interagency arrangements.	
Maintain the arms length model which gives the respective organisations the ability to trade and borrow money outside local government restriction. Preference to retain 3 company structures, but happy for further work on this to be undertaken. Advocates expanding the role of the arms	Management of council housing in Leeds is integrated within direct council control and concentrates on core activity: good quality lettings; tenancy management and support; resident involvement; the management of repairs; improvements and adaptations; void management; and

length company to integrate their delivery with wider range of council services.

rent collection and arrears management. Other key functions transfer to other parts of the Authority eg estate resources to be combined with the street cleansing and enforcement staff employed in Environmental Action and transferred to their control.

- **LCC Elected members**

There was little appetite amongst the majority of elected members for retaining the current 3 ALMO model. It was felt that there was too much inconsistency, a general lack of accountability, and that the ALMOs were perceived by some to be difficult to engage with. All agreed that in any new model a locally responsive delivery model should be retained and strengthened. Integrated community service provision should be retained and provided with additional support if resources could be found.

It was also felt that Elected Members needed a greater involvement in scrutiny and performance management of housing management, as they are the local voice of the community and are often the first point of contact for tenants with complaints. Much greater scrutiny of housing management decisions is needed generally, however if there was greater ward member input into the strategic direction they could effectively scrutinise the decisions to ensure all local residents have the opportunity to benefit from the improved services and delivery mechanisms that are put in place.

Members were keen that strong tenant involvement was retained and strengthened. There was also support for elected tenant representatives to sit on Area Panels, Boards etc.

There was also some concern expressed from opposition councillors at the lack of all-party representation on Strategic Governance Board and felt that any future arrangements should reflect this.

- **ALMO Staff**

A mixed response about any future delivery model, but it was agreed that there were too many inconsistencies across the 3 ALMOs and those tenants should expect a consistent, good quality service wherever they lived in the city.

Staff enjoyed the localised approach to their work and generally as long as they were able to continue to operate in this way the overall structure/model was not as important to them. Local knowledge is vital in giving tenants a good service.

There was unanimous agreement in the dissatisfaction with the current repairs/maintenance arrangements within Aire Valley Homes and West North West Homes, and a general consensus that if staff could change things they would like to revert back to in-house provision of repairs and maintenance along the ENE model which was perceived to work very well.

Staff felt sometimes they were too target driven and the ALMOs need to remember they are dealing with people and their lives.

- **ALMO Managers**

A unanimous view that ALMOs provide a generic service meeting customer needs and based on trust and a strong customer relationship developed over many years. They offer customers a single well-informed point of contact to address a range of needs, some of which can be met by the ALMO structure and some of which must come from other providers with which the ALMO staff are a trusted facilitator. The knowledge and capability is largely locality based and the group felt this may be lost if the ALMO number was reduced.

Generic strengths to be retained in any remodelling included flexibility in the decision-making structure and the ability to make things happen quickly; knowledge and understanding to ensure that solutions are tailored to local needs and circumstances; outcome driven management, and the ability to represent local needs across a wide spectrum of stakeholders (Area Committees etc).

- **Area Panels**

The strength of Area Panels rests with the local tenant and other local representation, their knowledge of local needs and circumstances and their ability to marshal extra leverage via the ALMO to address local issues. They are a single, informed and trusted point of contact to address a range of local needs. Part of the relationship with the ALMO is community-based staff who have an understanding of local issues and links with providers of solutions. The fact that ALMO's interests and capability extend beyond just social housing and across a spectrum of community support was of high value to the Area Panels and to the tenants whose interests they represent.

There was some support for the ALMOs remaining in their current arrangement - but no strong feeling about remodelling provided it retained the freedom, flexibility and capacity to support the Area Panels in responding to local issues.

- **Trades Union**

A unanimous view to bring ALMO functions, including the ABCL, within council control, alongside related and complementary services. Perceived advantages include reduction in duplication of functions (and costs) (eg HR, finance, procurement); doing away with the differing models of ALMO independence and enables clear and consistent systems of accountability and governance to be established; enabling proper and consistent management of processes (HR and other) across the Council's domain (including housing services); exposing the function to Scrutiny; harmonising the application of Council staffing policy/strategy (eg ALMO recruiting whilst LCC is letting good staff go under ELI and redundancy); enabling consistent pan-city service levels; and negating the need for independent members except in a much as they might add value to the oversight of governance and audit issues for which purpose they can be co-opted.

Strengths to be maintained include tenant involvement, through the Area Panels, and the nature and breadth of community support they provide.

- **LCC Chief Officers**

A consensus view that the current three separate operating agreements with the ALMOs are high cost/high maintenance. A single Leeds model could be more cost-effective.

A single ALMO/in-house model would address current concerns about governance and accountability, consistency of service provision across the city, delivering value for money to tenants, joined up working and avoiding overlap and duplication. It would also facilitate alignment between ALMO services and those provided by other LCC service groups, reduce the current costs of negotiating and delivering three separate SLAs with the ALMOs, harmonise the specification and delivery of the Leeds Housing Strategy and housing growth and reduce the complexity and disproportionate high maintenance time/cost of the current financial management arrangements.

Care would need to be taken to retain the focus and ability to deliver on what we need at locally, the freedom and flexibility to operate effectively at a local level, and the single, local, well-informed and trusted local contact.