

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Leadership Board

SIG Name:	Councils with ALMOs Group
Lead Member:	Manchester City Council
Lead Officer:	Kenny Aitchison - Wolverhampton City Council (CWAG Chair)

Aim

CWAG is the representative body of stock owning authorities where the housing stock is managed by Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs).

As a Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association (LGA), CWAG is keen to work with the LGA to inform and influence policy activity on housing so it reflects the needs and concerns of Councils with ALMOs.

The Group aims to provide an effective link between member authorities and government departments, and others with a national policy and operational remit affecting councils with ALMOs.

CWAG aims to have an active role in influencing the national policy agenda, particularly in respect of ALMOs.

CWAG aims to develop positive partnerships with ALMOs and the National Federation of ALMOs to ensure best outcome for tenants / leaseholders.

The Group is also a forum for member authorities, providing mutual support, facilitating the exchange of ideas and sharing best practice between members.

Key Activities / Outcomes of work undertaken

During the past year the CWAG work programme has focussed on the following areas:

1. Policy Briefings and Analysis

Given the level of uncertainty around the implementation arrangements for a number of key policies, for example, the higher value assets levy, 'pay to stay' and fixed term tenancies, CWAG has focussed on providing timely briefings and updates to members on these issues along with regular wider updates on housing policy at CWAG General Meetings.

2. Working with Others

Throughout this year CWAG has continued to work with the Local Government Association (LGA), National Federation of ALMOs (NFA) and the Association of Retained

Council Housing (ARCH) sharing information on the emerging policy agenda. In addition to regular 'catch-up meetings', we have also met jointly with DCLG officials.

3. Providing Support for CWAG Members – Networking and Sharing Good Practice

The group continues to provide opportunities for members to network and share information with other councils with ALMOs who face similar issues.

The members' survey and other feedback provide the basis for planning events and setting the priorities within the work programme.

The CWAG website (<http://www.councilswithalmos.org.uk>) includes a 'members' area with noticeboard, discussion forum, document library and topic areas where information, case studies and other material from member authorities can be shared.

4. CWAG Meetings and Events

CWAG continues to offer a programme of General Meetings and workshops, with input from guest speakers and sector experts as well as practical case studies from CWAG members.

Topics are identified from member feedback and suggestions. In the past year the programme has included presentations covering housing policy; welfare reform; improving joint working between housing and health; and practical case studies and examples of good practice.

Topics covered in the past 12 months

- Update on the Housing and Planning Act 2016 - Andrew Barry-Purcell – Westminster CC
- Housing and Planning Act' What Next? - John Bibby, CEO of ARCH –Keynote presentation AGM
- The Housing White Paper – implications for councils with ALMOs? - Catherine Hand, Trowers and Hamlin – Presentation and discussion.
- Universal Credit – One Year On Findings from the 2016 NFA & ARCH Welfare Reform Survey - Chloe Fletcher – NFA Policy Director
- Initiatives for under 35s - Case study Solihull MBC
- Cornwall Housing 'U' Can stock-wide tenant profiling pilot. Case Study
- Health and Housing Workshop led by Gill Leng - National home and health advisor for Public Health England.
- Making best use of the Hometrack Market Intelligence Tool. - Rob Owens - Propositions Analyst Hometrack

Looking Forward

With the forthcoming General Election, the housing sector now faces a period of uncertainty. CWAG will continue to represent the interests of councils with ALMOs, working through the established partnership with the LGA.