

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Board

SIG Name:	Councils with ALMOs Group
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Membership

In the past 12 months, overall membership of the group has remained unchanged. However, one council has left the group on taking management back 'in house' (Newark and Sherwood DC), and another council has joined (Southend on Sea BC).

Blackpool Borough Council	Newcastle City Council
Cheltenham Borough Council	North East Derbyshire DC
Christchurch Bournemouth and Poole Council	Nottingham City Council
Colchester Borough Council	Sedgemoor District Council
Cornwall County Council	Shropshire County Council
Derby City Council	Solihull MBC
Doncaster MBC	Southend on Sea BC
Gateshead MBC	South Tyneside MBC
Haringey LB	Stockport MBC
Kirklees MBC	Sutton LB
Lewisham LB	Tower Hamlets LB
Manchester City Council	Wolverhampton City Council
Northampton DC	

Note – LB Barnet is a CWAG Associate Council, as such is not a full member of the Group or part of the SIG.

Aim

CWAG is the representative body of stock owning authorities where the housing stock is managed by Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). CWAG aims to have active role in influencing the national policy agenda, particularly in respect of ALMOs.

As a Special Interest Group, 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, government departments and others with a national policy and operational remit affecting councils with ALMOs.

CWAG aims to develop positive partnerships with ALMOs, the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA), the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) and others to ensure best outcome for tenants / leaseholders.

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

Key Activities / Outcomes of work undertaken

Responding to the National Policy Agenda

During the past year, CWAG has continued to work closely with the LGA, along with ARCH and NFA, to develop a shared approach on key issues facing the council housing sector.

Policy activity focussed particularly on improving landlord accountability, understanding regulatory requirements, delivering new build and fire safety measures as well as the need to plan to meet challenges around energy efficiency and climate change.

Since March 2020 however, the focus has shifted to co-ordinating the sector response to Covid19.

CWAG is involved in a number of cross sector policy focussed groups including:

- **MHCLG Sector Group Co-ordinating the response to Covid19** – regular weekly meetings where the sector can raise issues and concerns, gaps in guidance etc.
- **MHCLG Technical Group and LGA Housing Finance Group** – these groups meet regularly to discuss current policy, share views and expertise as well as acting as a sounding board on key issues e.g. new build, HRA business planning, Government consultations.
- **Consumer Standards Working Group** – this group met to develop proposals for a new set of performance measures to better enable tenants assess performance and hold landlords to account.

Providing support for CWAG Members – Networking and Sharing Good Practice

CWAG continues to provide information and support to members as well as opportunities for networking and information sharing with other councils with ALMOs who face similar issues.

Regular CWAG news updates aim to keep members up to date with important policy developments, provide briefings and relevant housing news and information.

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

During the past year, CWAG has worked with TPAS to produce a Tenant Engagement Good Practice Toolkit which addresses specific issues around delivering effective tenant engagement where this function has been delegated to an ALMO.

CWAG Meetings and Events

The programme of General Meetings and workshops is a key part of the CWAG "offer" to its members. Attendance at these events is included in the annual subscription fee and meeting topics are identified from member feedback and suggestions. Meetings provide an opportunity for networking and discussion with subject matter decided by member feedback and suggestions. Normally, at least four events are organised each year.

In the past year, the programme included the following topics:

- **Tenant Scrutiny and Governance** – Case studies from Stockport Homes and Your Homes Newcastle
- **Working with the Housing Ombudsman** – Emma Foxall, Deputy Ombudsman
- **Sector Trends and Challenges** – Alistair McIntosh -HQN
- **The Changing Regulatory Landscape** – Jim Bennett Regulator of Social Housing

At the current time, the CWAG meetings programme is suspended due to Covid19, however we are planning to introduce new on-line options for meeting and networking.

Forward Programme

Covid19 provides both opportunities and challenges. CWAG will continue to provide support and representation to member authorities in what is set to be a challenging operational and economic climate. The crisis highlights the importance of continuing to push key asks and promote the council housing sector. In addition, the current crisis has demonstrated the potential for new ways of working and communicating which we are keen to learn from and develop further.