

ALMON NEWS



Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing
August 2007, Issue 2



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It's your future, your choice

Over the last few months Council tenants and leaseholders in Charnwood have received several newsletters and leaflets about our proposal to set up an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) called Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing.

We see this as the best chance to see improved services and improve homes to the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

Now it is time for you to choose to give the setting up of Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing your support. It will not go ahead unless the majority of tenants

and leaseholders say 'yes' in support of setting it up. It is vital that your vote of support is received.

On the back page is a reply paid slip which asks whether you give your support to setting up Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing. Please fill in the form and send it back to us. Your vote

of support is vital as without it the extra money for improving homes and improving services will not go ahead.

We feel that setting up Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing is the best chance of making a change for the better, better services and better homes, without affecting tenants' rights and security of tenure.

Please use the reply paid slip (on the back page) as with your support, we can really make change happen.

FHM MAKE THEIR MARK IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Regeneration specialists, Frank Haslam Milan (FHM), have worked on a number of projects in Charnwood and Anstey, changing and improving the lives of hundreds of residents in the process.



FHM site teams, contracted by Charnwood Borough Council, refurbished rooms at two sheltered housing complexes last year in Anstey – Martin’s Court and Caters Close. Explains FHM’s site manager, Pete Watson: “We fitted new kitchens and vanity units in the bathrooms for tenants at Martin’s Court. At Caters Close, we installed walk-in showers and new bathrooms as well as complete kitchens for all the residents.

“Tenants at Martin’s Court were so pleased with the work we did that they even held a surprise Christmas buffet party as a ‘thank you’ for us.”

FHM has recently celebrated the completion of a pilot regeneration scheme for Charnwood Borough Council by being named as sole

contractor to deliver the Decent Homes Programme in Charnwood.

Continues Pete: “Last October, we started to fit new kitchens and bathrooms in over 173 properties in the Charnwood area.

“We completed work at the end of April and, in that time, built up excellent relationships with tenants such as Michelle Anderson and her daughter Terri-Mae who were delighted with the work we carried out in their homes.

“We were one of seven contractors in the running for the Charnwood Decent Homes work, so to be selected to continue the work is a fantastic achievement for everyone involved.

“We’ve already started work on around 50 properties and the

entire contract will run for five years. Our remit is to ensure all properties meet the Decent Homes standard set by the Government which will mainly involve the refurbishment of kitchens and bathrooms.”

Concludes Pete: “This is an important stage of housing regeneration for Charnwood Borough Council and an opportunity to make a difference to the lives of hundreds of residents in the area.

“Our focus is always on tenants and ensuring that the entire refurbishment process, from start to finish, runs like clockwork. Our site teams are hugely experienced and we relish the opportunity to play an active role in transforming communities for the benefit of every resident.”

Your questions answered

Since the last newsletter, many tenants have asked questions about how Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing would affect their homes and housing service. Here are the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

How will Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing be managed?

Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing will be managed by a Board of Directors which includes five tenants and leaseholders, five Council nominees and five independent members. The Board are unpaid.

Prior to go live of Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing, the Board is formed as a Shadow Board to enable them to oversee all activity relating to the set up of the ALMO. The Shadow Board will take over management as the Board of Directors when the ALMO goes live in November 2007.

Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing's Shadow Board meets every two/three weeks to make all the decisions necessary in order to set up Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing.

Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing will be managed on a day-to-day basis by its own management team who have all been recruited from outside the Borough and who have many years experience of working in top performing organisations.

Why is Charnwood Borough Council setting up the ALMO?

The Council is committed to improving its Housing Service and making sure their tenants' homes are refurbished to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Around 35% of homes fall below this standard and in addition to that we need to ensure our Housing Services provide tenants with an excellent rated service.

We have already examined all the options for extra funding and we asked tenants their views. The option selected that had greater benefits and stood the best chance of getting the money required was to set up an ALMO and apply for extra Government funding.

ALMOs who can demonstrate a minimum of a 2-star (good) rating to the Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate can obtain extra funding from the Government to accelerate investment in homes to bring them up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

We have applied for £35 million to spend on the refurbishment of tenants' homes. It is vital we obtain this extra funding if we are to achieve decent homes for our tenants.

How does Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing qualify for extra funding?

An ALMO has to demonstrate that it is providing a high standard of service before it gets its extra funding. This is done by means of an inspection conducted by the Housing Inspectorate (which is part of the Audit Commission) at least six months after the ALMO is established. In order to qualify for the extra funding the ALMO's services have to be rated as a 3-star (excellent) or 2-star (good).

If the ALMO does not achieve the necessary rating it may be possible to give it more time to improve its performance. Otherwise, the Local Authority may have to reconsider its options.

Why can't Charnwood Borough Council get the additional funding instead of the ALMO?

The Government considers that in order to make the best use of the resources available, funding should be limited to Local Authorities who have separated their management and strategic functions. Allocating the funding on this basis will help to ensure that the additional public money available goes to the Local Authorities and ALMOs that deliver the highest standards of service to their tenants.





What services will Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing provide?

- Estate management, environmental improvement
- Tenancy enforcement
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Rent and arrears collection
- Housing repairs
- Modernisation
- Empty properties
- Adaptations to tenants' homes

What functions will remain with Charnwood Borough Council?

- Housing strategy
- Housing allocations
- Housing benefit/rent rebate administration
- Overall policy on rents (subject to the rent restructuring regulations)
- Homelessness

How does the ALMO affect tenants?

The Council will still own the homes and remain as your landlord. It will continue to be responsible for setting rents and your rights and entitlements will also remain the same. It would also give tenants the opportunity to have a greater role in the management of their homes by being represented on the Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing Board.

The extra money raised will be used to speed up work required to bring all homes up to the Decent Homes Standard. Each home will be inspected and tenants will be informed what work is needed to bring their home up to the standard. This could include new windows, doors, kitchen and bathroom replacement, and upgrading central heating systems.

What will happen to rents?

If tenants agree with the ALMO proposal, the Council will still be your landlord, so your rent would continue to be set by the Council as it is now.

Rent levels are set by the Council in line with Government Guidelines. Rents will be unaffected

if Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing takes over the management of the Council's homes.

Would my rights and entitlements be protected?

Yes, if Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing is set up, tenants will not lose any of the rights and entitlements they have now. You will remain a tenant of the Council with a secure tenancy and your tenancy agreement will continue to apply.

You will still be able to claim Housing Benefit and, as your home will still be owned by the Council, you will still have the same Right to Buy entitlement as you do now.

How does the ALMO affect leaseholders?

Leaseholders have the opportunity to become more closely involved in the management of their homes by standing for the ALMO Board.

Will the Council still own my house?

This is not a stock transfer. Tenants' homes remain with the Council, but will be managed by Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing, which is a separate Company set up and owned by the Council, but run separately from the Council.

How will Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing be monitored?

One of the responsibilities of the Board is to monitor the performance. ALMOs also have to provide regular returns to the Government to ensure that they are progressing as planned.

Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing will be monitored by Charnwood Borough Council to ensure the obligations set out in the management agreement are complied with. Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing will also publish Annual Reports and Accounts.

What happens if the ALMO doesn't work out?

With proper monitoring, any problems should be spotted and solved quickly. But if things go seriously wrong, Charnwood Borough Council can end its agreement with Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing.

Who will staff the ALMO?

You will continue to see the same familiar faces of the housing staff who currently run your service as they will all transfer to Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing. A new, recently recruited, senior management team with a wealth of experience in housing and delivering 3-star (excellent) service will manage the ALMO.



Time For You To Choose

It is now time for you to choose whether you give your support to setting up the ALMO (Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing). Without you saying 'yes' below, the extra money for improved homes and improved services will not go ahead.

Do you give your support to the setting up of the ALMO (Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing)?

YES NO

Your details

Name _____

Address _____



DUDLEY COURT

PARKING
THIS AREA
EMERGENCY
VEHICLES ONLY

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