

Almo News

June 2006

SPECIAL EDITION



Charnwood

Leading in Leicestershire

KEEPING CHARNWOOD TENANTS INFORMED

Charnwood's New ALMO: What's Going On? - A Reminder

As we said in the last edition of Housing News we sent you a few weeks ago, the Council is still planning to go ahead with setting up a new ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation) to take over the management of our homes and flats and bring them all up to standard. We have received a disappointing 'zero star' housing inspection, but we have also been judged as having 'promising prospects for improvement' and we are committed to making our services better. This means that we are confident that we will be successful in our bid for extra money.

The Council will set up this new organisation. Charnwood Borough Council will still be the owner of your home. It will stay as your landlord and set your rent. You continue as secure tenants of the Council, with no change to your rights such as the Right to Buy, the Right to Repair and the Right to Manage. Likewise, leaseholders' terms and rights will not be affected.

What the new ALMO can do, however, is bring in money for repairing and improving your homes. This is money that Charnwood Borough Council is unable to get without setting up an ALMO. We see this money as essential if we are to bring all our houses and flats up to the Decent Homes Standard. At the moment around 31% of our homes fail to meet that standard.

The new ALMO will be a 'not for profit' management company that would be wholly owned by the Council.



Key fact

The proposed ALMO will manage and maintain your home. The Council will still own it and set the rent. You will stay as a Council tenants.



Key fact

By setting up an ALMO, the Council will have the opportunity to get extra money to improve and repair your homes.



Key fact

We see improving our services as an important part of setting up a successful ALMO. We also want to increase the ways tenants can have a say in the way the service is run.



Key fact

Setting up an ALMO will not have any impact on rent levels.

Charnwood's New ALMO: What tenants told us

We followed up our last newsletter with a random sample telephone survey and a number of focus groups to find out what tenants thought about our proposals and what concerns, if any, they had. Thank you to everyone who took part in the survey and focus groups.

We found that the vast majority of people understood what we are planning to do and that 90% had read our newsletter. There was a minority, however, (around 29%) who said that they did not understand the reasons for setting up an ALMO. Over half (55%) of the people who took part in the telephone survey said they supported our plan to set up an ALMO at this stage, but a lot of people (27%) were not yet coming to a judgement and said they needed more information.

The focus groups allowed us to ask what tenants felt in greater detail. The tenants who took part told us of their concerns about repairs and the need for improvements to their homes – particularly improvements to kitchens, bathrooms, central heating and insulation. There was a strong preference for the Council to stay as the landlord and tenants understood that the ALMO would allow this.

Most people understood what an ALMO is, although a number felt they needed more information on the details and why it was necessary to set an ALMO up to get extra money for investment in Council homes. At the end of the focus groups, three-quarters of those who took part supported the Council setting up an ALMO.

This newsletter gives you more information and addresses the queries raised during the survey and focus groups.



Charnwood's New ALMO: What will the new ALMO look like?

The next stage in setting up an ALMO is to get the government's approval to go on its annual programme. We can only set up an ALMO and get hold of the extra money to invest in our homes if the government approves our application. The bid is currently being written and will be sent to the government next month.

Our up to date bid proposals for the ALMO are:

- The ALMO will be run by a Board made up of 15 people – 4 tenants and 1 leaseholder, 5 cross-party Council representatives and 5 people who are independent.
- We are looking at setting up Local Housing Boards where tenants can be involved in overseeing performance and investment plans for their local areas.

- We will be bidding for over £20m of extra money to bring all the Council homes up to the Decent Homes Standard. If we do not get this extra money, our homes will not meet the standard that the Government requires all councils to meet.
- In order to get the extra money, the ALMO must improve the current management and maintenance service. The Council already has an improvement plan that focuses on providing a more responsive management and repairs service.
- The funding will mean key benefits for you, your home and the community. Some homes will benefit from new windows, others new bathrooms and kitchens - improvements the Council could not afford to deliver without the funding.



Who will do what?

	ALMO	Council
Day to day management of Council homes	✓	
Carrying out the investment strategy	✓	
Repairs	✓	
Setting rents		✓
Overall housing strategy		✓
Lettings policy and managing the housing register		✓



Key fact

The ALMO will be managed by a board that includes tenants and leaseholders, councillors and people who are independent.



Key fact

A successful ALMO will bring extra money to invest in Council homes. We will only meet the Decent Homes Standard if we get this extra money



Key fact

The Council will be responsible for setting the rents, overseeing policy and performance, tenancy conditions, lettings policy and managing the housing register.



Key fact

The ALMO needs to improve current levels of performance to make sure the extra money will be available. The improvement plan focuses on a more responsive service.

Charnwood's New ALMO: We need your views

We will only be able to set up an ALMO if tenants and leaseholders across the Borough support it. In a few days' time we will be consulting you further and finding out what you think through surveys and focus groups. You may well get a letter from Partners in Change, a company working for us, contacting you about these.

You can also make your views known in a number of other ways.

- You can contact TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service), the Independent Tenant Advisor for the ALMO project. They play a key role in ensuring that tenants and leaseholders are well informed about all aspects of the project and equipped to play an active role. They will also

collate the views of tenants and leaseholders. You can contact the TPAS consultants, Carole Amer and Phil Brandum, on Freephone 0800 7311315.

- You can contact Charnwood Borough Council for more information or to let them know your views. You need to contact John Downs Deputy Director of Housing, on (01509) 634 567. You can also email him at: John.Downs@charnwood.gov.uk
- As mentioned in the last edition of ALMO News, you can join the Charnwood Residents Steering Group. This group looks at the proposals in detail and helps shape the new ALMO. If you are interested in knowing more about this group, you can contact TPAS or the Council at the numbers above.

Timetable for the ALMO and Next Steps

June 2006	The Council makes the decision about the application (bid) to go on to the Government's ALMO programme.
July 2006	Application submitted to the Government.
Autumn 2006	Government expected to make an announcement on whether Charnwood's bid has been successful and the additional resources applied for (this approval will be subject to the Council getting a 2 star rating at its next inspection).
Autumn 2006	Further consultation with tenants and leaseholders to find out your views and final Government approval is obtained to pass over management of the housing to an ALMO.
November 2006	Tenants and councillors will have been nominated to the Shadow Board of the new ALMO.
February 2007	Independent people will have been appointed and the new board for the ALMO has its first formal meeting.
July 2007	The New ALMO takes over management of the Council's housing.

About six months later there will be another inspection. If we are successful with being judged a 'two star' service, we will receive additional money from the government.

Watch this space for further newsletters and information about our proposed ALMO

This information is available in different formats. To access these please phone (01509) 634560.

এ তথ্যাদি অন্যান্য মাধ্যমে পাওয়া যায়। এসব পেতে হলে দরকারে (01509) 634560 এ নাম্বারে টেলিফোন করুন।

這資料具不同的格式，請致電 (01509) 634560 索取。

आ माहिती खुद्दी खुद्दी पद्धतिओमां उपलब्ध छं. ते येणववा माटे कृपया करी आ नंबर पर बोल करी (01509) 634560.

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