

LGA Special Interest Group Annual Report to LGA Board

SIG Name:	Councils with ALMOs Group
Lead Member:	Manchester City Council / Nottingham City Council (Change in lead authority due July 2021)
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Membership

In the past 12 months, membership of the group has reduced by two councils (in March 2021 Gateshead MBC and Kirklees MBC brought management of council housing back 'in house'). Manchester City Council is also planning to bring management back 'in house' in July this year.

Blackpool Borough Council	Newcastle City Council
Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council	North East Derbyshire DC
Cheltenham Borough 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
Lewisham LB	Sutton LB
Manchester City Council	Tower Hamlets LB
Northampton DC	Wolverhampton City Council

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

Aim

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. In addition, this group (LGA, ARCH, CWAG and NFA) now hold regular 6 weekly on-line catch-up meetings where issues are discussed, and actions agreed.

This year there has been a particular focus on co-ordinating the sector's response to Covid19 and liaising with MHCLG to raise areas of concern. Other policy work has been linked to delivering commitments in the Social Housing White Paper, in particular planning for changes to regulation and the new fire and building safety regimes. Balancing councils newbuild aspirations alongside other investment challenges, including energy efficiency and responding to climate change, are also ongoing policy priorities.

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

- MHCLG sector group co-ordinating the response to Covid19
- MHCLG Technical Group
- LGA Housing Finance Group
- Consumer Standards Working Group
- Decent Homes Review
- Regulation sounding board (not sure what this group is called)

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.councilswithalmos.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.

A joint CWAG / NFA project (known as the Smart Clienting Project) aims to ensure ALMO governance models and performance monitoring arrangements are fit for purpose and reflect changes to regulation. This project is due to report in September 2021.

This year also saw the publication of the CWAG commissioned good practice report on tenant engagement [‘The role of councils in ensuring quality and effective tenant](#)

[engagement by their ALMOs](#)' and associated ['Toolkit'](#). The report was written for CWAG by Tpas to assist councils seeking to improve performance in relation to tenant engagement as well as ensuring effective oversight and monitoring arrangements are in place.

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.

During the past year, it was necessary to move the meetings programme on-line. This allowed us to test out different approaches, for example, in June the General Meeting was delivered as a series of three shorter meetings over several weeks. The move to on-line meetings has been generally well received, reducing travel time and other costs whilst allowing for a more flexible programme format and higher overall attendances.

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

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- Right to Buy reform
- Housing Management Issues and Covid19
- Tenant engagement – good practice for councils with ALMOs
- Finance and Business Planning
- Regulatory Issues and the White Paper
- Decarbonisation

Forward Programme

In the coming year, the focus will continue to be on recovering from Covid 19, changes to regulation and the implementation of the new building safety regime. We will of course respond to new issues and challenges as they arise.

Within CWAG, we are planning the transfer of the lead authority role from Manchester City Council to Nottingham City Council. In addition, the workplan includes commissioning a new website.