



## NFA BOARD UPDATE

This note updates members on NFA activities since the September meeting.

- 3 workshops for ALMO and LA officers on the implications of the NFA/CIH/HouseMark financial proposals have been well attended.
- 1 seminar for new and aspirant ALMOs was fully subscribed.
- 2 seminars for Board members on Setting the Future Vision were also full.
- A workshop on completing the building cost model on 17<sup>th</sup> March was full.
- The 2006 NFA annual conference and AGM will be held at the Royal York Hotel on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April 2006.
- The final version of the report *ALMOs – a new future for council housing* has been published as a website version only.
- The NFA has written articles for the March/April edition of Roof and for the special ALMO/LSVT edition of Inside Housing in March, Mike Owen has been interviewed for Northern/Midlands/Southern Housing and NFA has supplied information and comment to a number of different journals.
- ODPM has published guidance on payment for Board members and the NFA will shortly canvass members to identify how many ALMOs are considering implementing payments.
- ODPM has issued a paper on the Support Framework and the NFA consulted members on proposals for twinning ALMOs. Although few responses have been received ALMOs appear to be in favour and the policy officer is now discussing their particular needs with individual ALMOs.
- The NFA has responded to the ODPM consultation paper on enabling local authorities to contract out their ASBO function and has co-operated with an ODPM priority review on anti-social behaviour and housing powers.
- The NFA has consulted members on a revised constitution.
- Briefings on FRS17 and Corporation Tax have been commissioned and advice to ALMOs on the implications of the Brixen case has been issued
- The NFA met the Housing Minister in November and ODPM officials in January (see below).
- The government has still not announced either the response to the review of the long term future of ALMOs nor the timetable for round 6. About 14 authorities are thought to be waiting to go into the next round.



- 2<sup>nd</sup> tranche allocations for Round 3 ALMOs were issued in February and an across the board 2% cut imposed except for one ALMO whose allocation increased to cover works to stock taken out of a PFI scheme. Round 4 ALMOs are likely to be similarly treated.
- The government's response to the Barker review included a proposal to consult on allowing local authorities with ALMOs the flexibility to use their own resources (including land) to build and own homes. Hounslow Homes is expected to be the first to build new ALMO homes.
- As at March 2006 44 ALMOs have been inspected or re-inspected with 10x3\*, 29x2\*, 4x1\* and 1x0\* ratings.

### **Ministerial and official meetings**

Members of the NFA Board met Yvette Cooper, the Housing Minister, in November 2005. Key issues the NFA raised were:

- To seek the Minister's support for our financial freedoms proposals and to press for an early outcome of the review and a statement from government about its intentions for the sector long term
- To stress the need for tenants to be fully involved in council decisions about the future of their ALMOs
- To urge the need for an announcement on round 6 timetable
- To invite Minister to address the ALMO Parliamentary group.

The Minister stated that the government was very impressed with the way ALMOs were working, particularly their impact on decent homes and tenant involvement, and that she was enthusiastic about ALMOs. She said that the government was looking at the future possibilities of additional functions for ALMOs but could not indicate a possible date for an announcement.

The Minister's main concern was the government's response to the Barker review and she was particularly interested in the potential for ALMOs to build new homes. The decent homes programme seemed to be no longer a major issue although she was interested in raising additional investment to maintain decent homes and neighbourhoods in the longer term.

The meeting with ODPM officials and NFA steering group members in January was primarily concerned with detailed questions in relation to the NFA/CIH/HouseMark proposals for financial freedoms. A team of officers dedicated to progressing the review has been established separately from the ODPM team dealing with day to day ALMO work but the publication of a consultation paper is still delayed and looks unlikely before the local government elections. On operational matters the NFA urged ODPM to progress the proposed guidance on representation in court.

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