



## Social & Community Development Sub-Group – A1 Housing Bassetlaw Limited

### **A1 Housing**

The future of Bassetlaw's Council Housing stock is vitally important to the sustainability of many of our neighbourhoods, especially those in the former mining areas of Manton, Carlton and Harworth. The Council's challenge to address the under investment and reduction in social housing stock has been well documented in its Area Housing Strategies. In 2001 Bassetlaw District Council commissioned a stock condition survey to see if it could meet the Decent Homes Standard from within its own resources. The results of this survey were fed into the Strategic Housing Best Value Review and into the Stock Option Appraisal, both of these exercises identified that the creation of an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) was the best option to fund the shortfall and maintain the position of Council Tenancies.

As shown in our initial ALMO bid and the subsequent Section 27 Application the creation of the ALMO had the full backing of Councillors, Officers, Unions and more importantly Tenants. In April 2004 the Council balloted the tenants on the creation of an ALMO and the results showed that 85.3% were in favour of creating A1 Housing.

### **Context and Overview**

A1 Housing operates in an environment that is ever changing and it has to contribute to national, regional and local priorities and objectives. A1 Housing is crucial to the achievement of the Council's overall objective of creating a 'Balanced Housing Market', through the provision of high quality affordable housing, with equal access to services and with the delivery of improved services.

As an organisation we are responsible for the management of the 7,500 Council properties of which, approximately 3,000 (260 sheltered properties) are dedicated to the elderly. The stock profile no longer meets the needs of the local community due to Right to Buys, changing customer expectations and changing patterns of demand (locations).

Our key issues can be summarised as:

- ▶ Delivering a £103 million Capital Investment Programme to achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- ▶ Setting up effective partnerships to deliver the capital programme
- ▶ Consolidating the new A1 structure
- ▶ Consolidating partnerships with tenants, the Council and all other stakeholders
- ▶ Reviewing Service Level Agreements and all methods of procuring goods and services
- ▶ Improving service delivery and tenant involvement/satisfaction
- ▶ Improving performances including equality and diversity issues

A1 Housing's key objectives are:

- ▶ To achieve a minimum of a 2 star rating
- ▶ To deliver decent homes by 2010
- ▶ To contribute to National, Regional and Local housing related objectives and priorities
- ▶ To increase tenant participation/involvement
- ▶ To deliver IT improvements and develop an increased range of e-government services
- ▶ To deliver equality of opportunity for all



As an organisation we are committed to having a highly skilled and trained workforce, which is focused on excellent service delivery and continuous improvement. We are currently in the process of obtaining the Investors in People (IIP) accreditation (on-site inspection April 2005) in our own right we held the accreditation as a service within Bassetlaw DC.

### **Tenant and Resident Satisfaction**

We have seen a steady increase in the levels of tenant satisfaction as demonstrated by the recent STATUS Survey and this is supported by our own internal surveys (repair satisfaction cards). However, we still have more to do in ensuring that levels of tenant satisfaction and participation continue to increase and that more people get involved in decision making. The introduction of 2 Tenant Participation Officers has helped in improving tenant participation issues and we intend to supplement this by increasing the number and type of tenant focus groups (especially among the elderly and young) to help improve service delivery.

Whilst we have a degree of knowledge about our tenants we still need more information. We are now currently in the middle of conducting a 100% survey of our tenants to obtain further information (on age, sex and race). The census data shows that we have low numbers of BME groups especially in the social housing sector and that we have an above average number of tenants suffering from long-term illnesses. This data will help us target our resources more effectively and will allow us to profile areas for targeted consultation etc.

### **Partnerships**

We recognise that A1 Housing cannot deliver all our or any of our objectives in isolation and as such we work with a wide range of partners, including:

- Tenants and Residents
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Constructors and Builders
- Neighbouring ALMO's
- Police, Mediation, Anti-Social Behaviour Groups

Our partnership with tenants is enshrined in the Tenants Compact. We are also working with the local college/schools, unions, construction partners and Remploy to develop training on trade apprenticeships and developing multi-skilling amongst our own workforce. A good example of our partnership (and procurement) work is the joint exercise with Newark and Sherwood Homes to employ partners to deliver the Decent Homes Standard and to appoint external Auditors.

### **Decision Making**

A1 Housing has a clear and accountable framework for delegation and decision making for both Board Members and officers. Being open and transparent is central to A1 Housing and to demonstrate this all Board meetings are advertised and open to the public, we also have a 15-minute session available for questions from the public prior to every Board meeting. All of the Board minutes and our forward plan for key decisions are made available on our website.

A1 Housing believes that success can only be achieved with a strong, listening, trained and willing workforce and we have demonstrated over the last 4 years that we have a good track record of delivering change and improving service delivery and tenant participation. We will continue to work in partnership with partners, tenants, the Board, staff and unions to deliver further changes over the coming years.

**For more information please contact Bernard Coleman, Managing Director A1 Housing Bassetlaw Ltd. on 01909 533433.**