

Come On, Join the NAT FED

Says NFTMO committee member Suzanne Hall

I work in Salford for Windsor Albion Co-op, as their Administrator. The Co-op has been established now since 1996, but unfortunately for me I only took up post in 2000. I say unfortunately as I missed the all important periods of the developing stages, of which the experiences (good and bad) still today play an important role in determining some of the tenants attitudes when decision making and dealing with the Council, contractors etc.

Before my arrival I worked as a Housing Officer for Manchester City Council for 9 years and found the transition from a large organisation to a very small, more intimate set up quite difficult at times as I had no prior knowledge about TMO's. This caused me many problems especially when trying to adjust to how the Co-op wanted me to assist them, in the day-to-day management of their properties.

Over the then coming months I read about and spoke to as many people as possible to try and expand my knowledge of TMO life, in the hope of assisting me in my new role. Last year the Co-op received a membership application to join the NFTMO and an invite to a NFTMO meeting including seminar themes that at the time I had a strong interest in. On behalf of my Co-op I attended the meeting in February 2002 at New Century Hall, Manchester and really enjoyed the day. I met and listened to a lot of very interesting people, some who really knew their stuff and some like me who were new to it all but really wanted to know more. After this, along with a fellow Board member I attended another NFTMO Open meeting where I met familiar faces and could now relate better to issues being raised.

I am now an Executive Committee member and even though it's all still very daunting, I am thoroughly enjoying myself. I love attending the meetings, interacting with others and learning so much. The whole experience is



Suzanne, second from the left, pictured with other executive committee members before a recent NFTMO meeting.

helping me no end with my own role at Windsor Albion as I take so much back. I know I have a long way to go still but the confidence and knowledge that my involvement in the NFTMO is now giving me will allow me to go further.

Membership of the NFTMO is open to all tenant management co-operatives, estate management boards and other forms of TMO. Your group can also join if you are receiving Section 16 or similar grant funding and you are working to set up a TMO in your area. The annual membership fee is currently set at 10 pence per dwelling managed. More information and a membership application form can be requested by E Mailing tb-natfedtmos@fsmail.net, by ringing 01704 227053 or by writing to the NFTMO Secretary at 11 Carter Avenue Burnley BB1 5RG

BENCHMARKING - How Does Your TMO Measure Up?

Most TMOs agree that a study visit to another estate is a great idea. We often make comparisons with our own area and return with useful ideas for changes. But there is a limit to how many visits we can fit in and the information we gain from visits can sometimes be a bit haphazard.

So wouldn't it be great to have an easier way of identifying the areas our own TMO needs to focus on - such as where we need to strengthen our performance - at the same time making it easier to see how well other TMOs are doing. Even better if in the process we could tell which TMOs may have useful lessons to help us improve. If you agree then we have some good news!

The NFTMO has teamed up with an organisation called HouseMark to develop a new 'benchmarking' tool to help TMOs compare performance and learn from each other. HouseMark is a not for profit organisation part owned by the Chartered Institute of Housing and are the UK's leading benchmarking specialists. The work has been made possible by an 'Innovation into Action' grant from the Government's ODPM.

Benchmarking has been popular amongst Councils and housing associations for some time, but to date TMOs have not had an easy way of making such comparisons. When the project started to look at the services that TMOs would like to compare, it became obvious that in addition to housing management performance, TMOs have other priorities. TMOs are expected to continuously improve and often need to prove that they can effectively manage their finances and organisation. The benchmarking model the NFTMO have developed for TMOs looks at three main areas - housing management performance, financial management and 'good governance'. 'Good governance' covers things like committee work, accountability to the

TMO tenants, training and staff management. Next year the project will go on to develop a way for TMOs to compare against each other in relation to social and community development.

Unlike traditional benchmarking, which is often restricted to looking at performance and costs, the TMO benchmarking model has been designed to help TMOs undertake a more complete and honest health check with regards to the way we manage our finances and run our organisation. Some of the quotes from TMOs expressing an interest in the benchmarking project speak volumes. They write:

"We are excluded from much of the Council's best value work. TMO benchmarking is an excellent opportunity to be able to effectively measure our performance and enhance our own best value work"

"We would desperately like to see how we compare and to liaise more with other TMOs"

"We have made a number of improvements to our services since going live - and would welcome the opportunity to compare these with other TMOs with a view to sharing good practice"

Over the coming months we will be working with a pilot group of 12 TMOs nationally to help put the finishing touches to the TMO benchmarking model. Most importantly, we want to keep in touch with these TMOs to see how useful the benchmarking is in helping them identify areas of weakness and bring about change.

We are looking to open the benchmarking programme up to other TMOs during the spring/summer of 2004. So, watch this space!

In the next issue of the TMOs Magazine

Tenant Management in the North East - how is it doing? • To second or not to second staff - that is the question. • Arms Length Management Organisations and TMOs • The Big and the Small - does size matter for TMOs? • If you have views or contributions on any of these issues please contact the Editor at magazine-natfedtmos@fsmail.net or ring 01704 227053.



Walsall TMOs Join Forces in Unique Transfer

The completion of the transfer of 1800 Walsall Council homes to the WATMOS Housing Co-op has written a new chapter in the history of tenant management organisations in England. The Housing Co-op was set up by eight Walsall TMOs who now jointly run what is effectively their own landlord body.

Walsall has long been a 'hot bed' of tenant management but the future of TMOs in the west midlands borough became uncertain when the Council proposed a large-scale voluntary transfer. The TMOs already had close links through their membership of the Walsall Alliance of TMOs (WATMOS) and so decided to work together in order to explore what alternatives there might be to the proposed borough wide transfer. After careful study and discussion the TMOs were unanimous in choosing to set up their own, stand alone, registered social landlord.

A successful ballot was held in June 2002 and WATMOS took ownership of the homes in March this year. Each TMO is continuing to manage their own local housing through a formal management agreement with WATMOS. The eight TMOs also have one representative each on the Board of the WATMOS Housing Co-op.

WATMOS received a 'dowry' from Walsall Council as part of the transfer deal because the properties were deemed to have a negative value. This money,



together with loans from the Lloyds TSB Bank, will provide the TMOs with much needed extra investment in housing repairs and improvements.

The completion of the transfer was celebrated by over 200 WATMOS members and supporters at a special launch in May. Speaking at the launch Lord Graham of Edmonton, a Co-operative Party representative in the House of Lords, praised the initiative and co-operative spirit of all the Walsall tenants involved.

The approach adopted by WATMOS is bound to be of interest to clusters of TMOs in other parts of the country where stock transfer is being considered.

The eight TMOs who form WATMOS are the Avenues, Burrowes Street, Chuckery, Delves East, Delves West, Leamore, Sandbank and Twin Crescents. Officers of the eight TMOs are pictured above at the signing ceremony. WATMOS is chaired by the NFTMOs very own Terry Edis.

Nat Fed to Focus on Services to TMOs

It promises to be a busy year for the NFTMO. An expansion of the Federation's activities and membership will be linked to new services to TMO members.

New NFTMO Chair Terry Edis is positive about the future but knows there is hard work ahead. "It is a bit of a fresh start for the Nat Fed" he said "and we know from recent research that there is a real need for better networking and support services to TMOs. An ODPM grant will help the Federation employ a part-time support worker, publish regular newsletters, develop our TMO directory, run national and regional networking events and provide briefings and advice to TMOs."

Terry added "We aim to develop our Website, possibly in collaboration with TMOonline and to publish good practice guidance for TMOs. The Federation is already working very successfully with HouseMark to develop a national benchmarking model for TMOs and we also plan to produce some much needed guidance for TMOs involved in stock transfer."

The Nat Fed also plans to work in partnership with other tenants organisations. "There is plenty of work to be done," Terry stressed, "so we aim to work closely with national organisations like the Confederation of Co-operative Housing to make sure that TMOs across the country get the support and information they need. We also want to build links with TMO networks in London and to increase the number of London TMOs in membership and on our executive committee."

By "TMO" we mean.....

In this newsletter we use the term "Tenant Management Organisation (TMO)". When we refer to TMOs we include in that definition Tenant Management Co-operatives, Estate Management Boards and other tenants organisations with formal responsibility for managing their own housing. The National Federation seeks to promote the interests of all such organisations.

In this issue of the TMO Magazine

Management Agreement problems? • TMOs and Stock Transfer • News from the ODPM • Taxing a TMO Surplus! • TMO staff network proposed • Fast track in Westminster • Benchmarking for TMOs and much more!

MANAGING TO AGREE?

Solicitor Naomi Goode offers some advice to TMOs who want a more effective Management Agreement.

We all know that TMOs work in perfect harmony with councils. In the unlikely event that a query arises, both parties look at the management agreement, which deals with the situation in a crystal clear way and the problem is instantly resolved. If only!

The best thing that can happen to a legal agreement (depressingly for lawyers) is that it is put in a drawer as soon as it has been signed and never looked at again. However, it is not an ideal world and TMOs frequently have to dust down the management agreement and see how it can help them resolve a dispute with the council, for example by making the council do what it should be doing. This article looks briefly at the enforcement by TMOs of council's commitments under the management agreement.

The absolutely best way of avoiding problems enforcing the management agreement is to get the management agreement right in the first place. It is amazing how often this does not happen. Sometimes, the parties have selected "modules" in the Modular Management Agreement that conflict with each other. Other times, gaps in the standard modular document have not been filled in, or even complete schedules omitted.

Perhaps the most frequent problem is that the management agreement does not reflect how things are intended to work on the ground. For example, the agreement says that the council will retain the rent and service charge collection functions, but right from day one the TMO, with the Council's

approval, collects service charges. Two years later the council stops providing adequate service charge information to the TMO and the TMO has no legal redress because the agreement deals with service charge collection by the council.

The modular management agreement is a useful model, but the TMO and Council must think about their specific circumstances. For example, if the Council has entered into a management agreement with an ALMO, it is crucial that arrangements as between the council, the ALMO, and the TMO are thought through.

Ideally every year TMOs should review what they are doing and what the agreement says. If they are different, agree the variation with the council. Even if the Council does not agree, the fact you have told them will help you.

The modular management agreement provides for a series of meetings to take place if there is a dispute, ultimately leading to arbitration. This can be a lengthy and expensive process and is best avoided wherever possible. The TMO's negotiating strength is greatly increased and the chances of avoiding arbitration massively reduced if the TMO can point to clear provisions in the agreement that support the TMO's position.

Finally, even though some councils seem to forget this, the terms of the management agreement are legally binding on the council as well as the TMO!

Naomi Goode, of Jenkins and Hand Solicitors, has wide experience advising TMOs and will be exploring other legal matters in future issues of this magazine. If your TMO has experience of resolving a problem associated with your Management Agreement we would like to hear about it.



Isolated TMO Workers - Are You Out There?

Two of the Executive members of the NFTMO are Estate Managers/Administrators/Workers (or whatever other title has been assigned) coming from small TMO's. Suzanne Hall from Windsor Albion in Salford (178 Properties), and Julia Latham from Springfield Horseshoe in Wolverhampton, (104 properties). Having got together they realised that there are several networks for tenants, residents or leaseholders of TMO's, but not a fat lot for the hapless individuals who immerse themselves in repair contracts, allocations policies and run up huge phone bills surfing the ODPM website for the answer to that daft but possibly relevant question.

So, are you there? Do you often need another TMO worker who may just know what you on about? How about setting up a support network just for "us lot". Interested?

If so contact Julia on 01902 552872, or e-mail julia@springfieldhorseshoe.fsnet.co.uk or Suzanne on 0161 736 8809 or e-mail suzanne@windsoralbion.fsnet.co.uk

Oxford Brookes Report Unlikely to Convince the Doubters

The evaluation of TMOs by Oxford Brookes University was the latest in a number of studies to conclude that tenant management organisations generally perform better than the local authorities that own the housing. The study report, published last year, also found that TMOs were generally well run and often contributed to the strength of local community and social networks. Oxford Brookes also dismissed the idea that TMOs were a soft touch on tenancy management problems, reporting that TMOs tend to act sooner than their Council counterparts and with the benefit of local knowledge.

The report identified over 200 TMOs covering 53 local authorities and managing around 84,000 homes – that's an average of around 400 per TMO. Another 80 TMOs were in development at the time of the study.

A few years earlier another major study commissioned by the Government, this time carried out by consultants Price Waterhouse, had come to similar conclusions about the potential of TMOs to improve services and provide value for money, often in high stress housing areas.

In that case, and at a time when community empowerment is a feature of government social policy, why is the flow of new TMOs more of a dribble than

a torrent? Why does the professional housing world seem as reluctant as ever to welcome TMOs into the main stream?

The truth is that for every supportive housing officer (and thank you to them all) there is a larger number of their colleagues who are deeply cynical or just plain hostile to the idea of tenants managing their homes.

The Oxford Brookes study concluded that the role of local authorities is important to the success of TMOs yet the relationship is often not good. The same, we suspect, will apply in the housing association world. In some places TMO members have to spend more time and energy struggling with their landlord than they do addressing the problems of their estate.

It is true that not all tenants want or need a TMO. Tenant control is always likely to remain a minority activity. Of course TMOs make mistakes and things go wrong but no more so than in other housing organisations. But TMOs do work, that is a fact, and they deserve more recognition and respect in the housing world. The housing profession has embraced all sorts of change in recent years – is it too much to hope for a more positive approach to tenant control?

Calling All Housing Association TMOs!

PEP (Priority Estates Project) is being funded by the Housing Corporation to find any Tenant or Resident Management Organisations in Housing Associations. Are there any in your Housing Association? Are you a Registered Social Landlord tenant involved in a Tenant Management Organisation, an Estate Management Board or a Management Co-operative?

If so, please contact Jane Summers on 01422 846910 (jane.s@pep.org.uk).

They are looking for organisations that manage properties on behalf of the Housing Association, and have a management agreement that sets out their legal responsibilities.

At this stage PEP are just trying to map tenant management in the Housing Association sector, and will ask people to fill in a short questionnaire. We know you are out there – please get in touch!!

New Agreement For Brushes EMO



Keith Hardy of the Brushes EMO in Tameside is pictured with Andrew Broadhurst, the Deputy Chair of New Charter Housing (North) Limited, after the signing of a new management agreement between the two organisations.

Next Stop Denmark For Euro Visits



NFTMO secretary Tony Brankin writes

Tenants, officers and board members took a close look at housing in Berlin during a successful study visit in April. The visit was organised by Euro Visits Connections Organisation (EVCO) to look at the progress of planning, regeneration and housing in Berlin since the reunification of Germany.

The visit followed earlier trips to France, Belgium and Holland and started with an evening outing to see the Brandenburg Gate and the famous Checkpoint Charlie. The following morning we started our programme with a visit to the Department of Housing Policies where our host was a planner called Friedheim Nitsch. He explained that there were many empty flats in Berlin because they were too expensive for the expected influx of East Germans.

Another planner, Christian Hijer was our guide for the afternoon when we had a tour of some of the housing areas in the City. We learned that in 1990 the German Senate had encouraged residential construction companies to start a programme of targeted modernisation of Berlin's many large estates of residential blocks. Thanks went to group member Etya Swift who is German and who acted as our interpreter during the visit.

One of the estates we visited was the Hellersdorf Project. Here 42,000 apartments had, only 6 years earlier, been situated in a mud pit. We were shocked to hear that children had to change their shoes when they arrived at school after walking miles through the mud. Now roads had been completed, houses regenerated, shops and gardens had all been done. The homes were improved and modernised with an amazing reduction of 40% in energy bills! The apartments were modernised with tenants still living in their homes. Terrible, you say, but not when you realise each apartment was completed in 4 days!

Copies of a video about Hellersdorf and details of the next EVCO Euro visit, to Denmark in October this year, are available from EVCO at evco2001@hotmail.com Tony Brankin is the co-ordinator of EVCO.

News From ODPM Tenant Participation Branch



The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Tenant Participation Branch is an important source of support and funding for live and developing TMOs. They have kindly provided us with this round up of news from their team :-

Staffing in Tenant Participation Branch – the past few months have seen new faces appearing and other members changing desks. Two new members of staff, Cecilia Anto-Awuakye and Anthony Howells, will be dealing with grant payments and allocations. Erinyoja Akarovwe has taken over from Nick Dartnall (on temporary promotion) and is now managing the day to day work of the grant team. Nick will be taking over the monitoring role vacated by Theresa Hayes, who left the ODPM on 6th June to take a year off. We wish her all the best.

Training is taking up a great deal of time for new members of staff and those taking on new roles and added responsibilities. TP Branch has said that they hope that this will not affect too much the service they provide to TMOs, and to bear with them over this period of change.

Review of the RTM Modular Management Agreement (MMA) – ODPM is continuing with the updating of the MMA. In particular, its lawyers are making sure that not only does the new agreement stack up in legal terms, but also that it will provide a contractually sound document. This means, in particular, that there will be much more clarity about the roles and responsibilities of those involved and that this will provide a much better basis for the relationship between TMOs and their councils. TP Branch are hoping to be ready to reveal the new MMA around the autumn time.

For those groups in the development stage of the Right to Manage that have been negotiating with their councils on the basis of an early draft of the new MMA, ODPM's advice is that unfortunately these agreements will not be useable. The options are to wait until the new version is released, or to revert to the existing approved MMA.

S16 Programme Option Appraisal – ODPM has commissioned jointly with the Housing Corporation a review of the management of their grant programmes – Tenant Empowerment Grants (ODPM) and Community Training and Enabling Grants (HC). The review will look at ways of improving current management arrangements and better linking between the two programmes. TP Branch hoping that this will, among other things, provide a much more coherent programme of grants for both council and Registered Social Landlord tenants. Any new arrangements that are developed are expected to come on stream during 2004.

The "Communities Plan" – many of you may know that earlier in the year the ODPM launched its "Communities Plan". The Plan contains a commitment to putting tenants at the heart of decent homes delivery and strengthening independent support for tenants in the options appraisal process. The intention is that tenants should not feel that appraisal exercises are being carried out behind closed doors with pre-determined outcomes.

They are currently developing a strategy that will help ensure that this happens. As a start, ODPM recently circulated draft option appraisal guidance, part of which sets out how the government expects tenants to be involved in options appraisals. In addition, they will be looking at ways to enhance the capacity of tenants so that they can play a full part in the process, including the use of S16 Tenant Empowerment Grants. There will be plenty of information and publicity about this as soon as things have been finalised.

What do you want to know about? – Finally, TP Branch have asked us to find out from TMOs what information you would find helpful to see in this section of the Newsletter. If you have any thoughts on this, then please email them to the editor at magazine-natfedtmos@fsmail.net

STOP PRESS – RSO CONFERENCE DATE

The PEP Trust is running a national conference to launch the Resident Services Organisation (RSO) Network on Tuesday 21st October in London. The event will be of interest to any TMO interested in building on their work by developing resident services that create jobs for local people. For further information please contact Liz Clifton on 0207 281 9603 or E Mail to trust@pep.org.uk

Making Stock Transfer Work for a TMO

The transfer of Council housing to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) has not always been good news for tenant management organisations caught up in the process. The argument is often put that TMOs are simply not needed once there are tenant representatives on the RSL Board with bigger budgets for repairs and improvement. The loss of the Right to Manage on transfer and half hearted support from the Housing Corporation have added to the difficulties for developing and live TMOs once the transfer has taken place.

But some TMOs have not just survived a stock transfer, they have improved their services to tenants as a result of it. What is the secret of their success and what lessons can they offer to TMO groups who fear the worst when the stock transfer bandwagon begins to roll ? Here we look at two success stories from the North West.

The Transfer That Became A 'Love Affair'!

Carrbrook estate is a small estate owned by Manchester City Council but located in Stalybridge about 12 miles from Manchester. Since 1992, Carrbrook has run as a successful tenant management co-op with its own staff and a small Committee of Management drawn from local people.

In recent years, Manchester Council has begun a policy of transferring its overspill estates to new RSL landlords, a successful policy which has seen some of the least popular and most run-down estates receiving considerable investment, estate remodelling and a range of community regeneration initiatives.

3 years ago, following informal discussions with CHS who developed the Co-op, the Co-op Committee approached Manchester Housing Strategy Team to discuss their future and in particular, the possibility of a transfer to an RSL sympathetic to tenant management. Manchester Housing accepted their request, creating a Steering Group from Co-op Committee members, other Carrbrook tenants, Manchester and Tameside housing professionals and CHS, who were appointed as Tenants Friend.

The Carrbrook Steering Group immediately became pro-actively involved in all aspects of the transfer, they were not a group to be 'lead by the nose'!. The first list of suggested RSL's provided by Manchester Council was revised and extended. When Tameside objected to some of the new 'long' list of RSL's – not working in the Borough being a common complaint – the Steering Group wrote cogently to Tameside Council explaining their position and invited the Community Housing Task Force to join the debate. Tameside, to their credit, accepted the Steering Group's arguments and they got the 'long' list they sought.

Each RSL submitted proposals for the estate, visits were arranged and detailed questioning took place. Steering Group members travelled throughout Greater Manchester and Merseyside in search of a partner. From a shortlist of 3 RSL's unanimously approved by all parties represented on the Steering Group and after further visits and lengthy formal interviews, Mossclare Housing Ltd, a medium sized but locally based Manchester RSL was chosen as preferred partner.

The relationship between Mossclare and Carrbrook Steering Group has been a revelation. Unrelenting mutual respect and appreciation, candour, honesty and good humour has marked the relationship. Mossclare are deeply committed to continuing the Co-op, affirming and developing its work on the estate and investing £1.25 million in the next 18 months. Mossclare are



Carrbrook co-op members and Manchester's Chair of Housing at the opening of a show house on the estate.

full of admiration for the work of the Co-op Committee and worker, recognising their effectiveness in maintaining a popular and sought after estate which sets it apart from much of the surrounding less popular social housing.

Mossclare began in the late 1960's and grew out of concerns by Moss Side Council of Churches for the future of that area. The values that Canon Dr Gerry Wheale, the first Chief Executive brought to the organisation have continued during its gradual expansion and through the years. The possibilities that tenant controlled housing can offer has been viewed by Mossclare as an asset, a strength and a bedrock from which this transfer can move forward. Two different housing organisations with sound values and a clear sense of purpose have come together around mutual trust, respect and understanding. Carrbrook Co-op will transfer to Mossclare on 16th June. This is a transfer has moved from chance encounter to permanent relationship. A partnership that should travel well the rocky road of social housing in the 21st century.

John Fenton writes in a personal capacity. He was Tenant's Friend during the transfer and after 15 years with Community Housing Services now works on a freelance / independent basis. Contact 0161 926 8190

EMB Strengthens Tenants' Hand in Lee Valley Transfer



" We never considered giving up our Estate Management Board when the Council proposed a stock transfer for our area " recalls Christine Brand. It was clearly a wise decision. Christine chairs the Childwall Valley EMB in Liverpool and their striking success tells its own story.

The EMB had started managing their 900 dwelling Council estate in April 2000 and they had already made big improvements to the repairs and management services when a stock transfer was proposed for a cluster of estates in their corner of South Liverpool. Christine recalls how some people suggested to them that having tenants on the new local housing association board would remove the need for their own local EMB. " But " she says " we felt that having control over our own estate management would still be important after the transfer. It also gave us extra influence during the transfer negotiations."

The Childwall Valley estate is a mix of post war houses, flats and maisonettes. Tenants believed that the City Council had neglected the area and when the EMB went live its first priority was to tackle a massive repairs backlog. They opened their own estate office and appointed seconded staff from the Council after an unsuccessful attempt to recruit from outside. After a period using the Council's workforce the EMB opted to employ private repairs contractors.

" We became the best performing housing office in the City so we came in to the transfer discussions from a position of strength. " added Christine proudly. She admits to having been opposed to the transfer at the outset and the EMB did look at the option of becoming their own landlord. In the end their estate was transferred this year to Lee Valley Housing, a new subsidiary of Riverside Housing. The EMB has a tenant on the board of Lee Valley but has also maintained local control and has been negotiating a new Management Agreement to reflect the changed circumstances.

" We have negotiated improved management and maintenance allowances and the transfer has also created much needed funds to modernise the estate and build some new homes. " An ODPM grant enabled the EMB to employ



their own legal advisor and get help from First Call consultants during the negotiations.

The EMB now employs two " men in vans " who provide a popular quick response repairs service. They also employ wardens to increase security on the estate. In many ways the EMB has provided a model of good practice for their new landlord.

Christine says she would advise other TMOs faced with transfer to resist pressure to give up local control or change successful systems when a stock transfer is proposed. She remembers a comment from their estate manager, Gary Evans, when he moved to the EMB. " Gary told us that the EMB removed the shackles of bureaucracy and suddenly he was free to use his own initiative and to manage effectively ! " With an enthusiastic young committee the EMB success story looks set to continue.

The Right to Manage and RSL Tenants

Partnership and mutual goodwill are clearly key ingredients for a successful TMO but not all landlords are supportive and willing partners. TMOs in the Registered Social Landlord (RSL) sector will not prosper in the long term unless they have some rights enshrined in housing law. The NFTMO believes that RSL tenants should have the same Right to Manage that Council tenants have enjoyed since 1994. New draft Government legislation is expected to be published soon that is expected to propose a single common tenure for Council and RSL tenants. What that draft legislation says about the future of the Right to Manage is important for us all.

Your TMO and Stock Transfer

The NFTMO plans to publish a guidance booklet for TMOs in Stock Transfers. If your TMO has experience of stock transfer – positive or negative – then please let the NFTMO know by E Mailing details to magazine-natfedtmos@fsmail.net or by phoning 01704 227053.

CAN YOU HELP?

Does your group have experience that could help the TMOs who, in this regular feature, share a problem. If you can help you can contact the groups direct or via the NFTMO. If your TMO has a problem it wants to share in our next issue please contact the editor.

Taxman Wants Slice of Hard Earned TMO Surplus

Wisewood Estate Management Board Limited, was launched as a Limited liability, non profit making company on 3rd December 2001. Five years of hard work by a dedicated group of volunteers, battling against all manner of obstacles, became the first E.M.B. in South Yorkshire.

Since going live and proving ourselves capable of overcoming some initial problems we have succeeded beyond all expectations: dedicated work by the staff, combined with acquired knowledge and skill has resulted in a carry forward surplus of almost £50,000.

We were told by our accountants that they were convinced we should not have to pay corporation tax and we were looking forward to spending this money on already identified mini programme work which had been identified as priority.

In August of last year our accountants were advising us of some difficulty in convincing Inland Revenue that we were not a trading company and that the essence of our being was a community led organisation who were

spending a Local Authority budget which would not have attracted any form of Corporation Tax. Now we have received a letter telling us to pay Corporation Tax of £13,969. This we believe leads to a number of anomaly's and/or reprehensible behaviour .

1. It is a slap in the face for those volunteers who work without pay in an organisation of high achievement.
2. It takes away from the Community much needed resources.
3. It flies in the face of government policy which makes great play on investing/reinvesting in the development of communities.
4. It exposes a huge gap in the required "joined up thinking" of those who implement T.M.O. policies.

Perhaps the Deputy Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer could have a quiet word in a convenient corridor and sort this situation out: Quickly!

Wisewood EMB Sheffield

To Charge or Not to Charge, That is The Question.



My board are currently pondering over the question of whether or not to charge tenant visitors to our organisation. Prompted by a recent sufficient increase in requests from tenant groups to visit us we are reviewing our practise of not charging.

My board do not wish to make a charge when tenant groups in management request training visits, however when section 16 consultants are receiving considerable fees for the delivery of training programmes it seems appropriate to us to make a charge for staff and board members' time.

We are interested in hearing from other TMO's about their charging policy.

Helen Norton, Bushbury Hill EMB, Wolverhampton and NFTMO committee member.

WEB WONDERS!

Some recommended Web Sites for TMOs.

In each issue of the TMO Magazine we intend to publish details of Web Sites that will be useful to TMOs. If you want to recommend or review a site please send details to us at

Meanwhile here are three sites you may find useful :-

Getting grants !

The Access-funds website gives up to date information about the availability of grants and advice on fundraising. It includes news of new grant funding and directories of funding programmes including National Lottery, government, EU and charitable sources. Go to : www.access-funds.co.uk

Tackling Litter.

The governments defra website includes guidance on the duties of local authorities to keep public areas clean. It explains what standards of cleanliness are required and has photo examples of each standard. Go to : - www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/litter/code/part1.htm

The housing world.

If you don't subscribe to the Inside Housing magazine try visiting their website for a free update on national housing news and articles dealing with current housing issues. Includes facility to search archive news items and a jobs section. Go to :- www.insidehousing.co.uk

TMO Directory Still Available

The NFTMO still has copies available of our first National Directory of TMOs that contains a wealth of information about many of the nation's tenant management organisations. We aim to update the Directory and to increase the number of TMOs included so that it becomes an essential reference document for TMOs wanting comparative information about similar organisations. Future plans also include making the Directory On Line and potentially linking it to a benchmarking service now being piloted by the NFTMO and HouseMark (see back page).

If you want to obtain a copy of the TMO Directory or want your TMO to be included in future editions please contact us at tb-natfedtmos@fsmail.net or write to the Secretary at 11 Carter Avenue, Burnley BB1 5RG. The Directory is available free to TMOs although we do ask you to pay the £5 cost of postage and packing if you are not a NFTMO member.



TMO Model Rules OK?

PEP ltd are reviewing the model rules that most TMOs have used when registering as a Company or as an Industrial and Provident Society. They would be interested to hear from groups who have encountered difficulties with their registered rules or have made rule changes in the light of experience. If you have any information or views then please get in touch with PEP consultant Jane Summers by calling her on 01422 846910 or send an E Mail to jane.s@pep.org.uk

Cath Takes A Well Earned Rest!



Cath Quine MBE stood down as chairperson of the NFTMO at the Annual General Meeting earlier this year. Cath, pictured here with new chair Terry Edis, was one of the founder members of the NFTMO and is also an inspirational activist in her own community of Digmaor in Skelmersdale. As a tribute to Cath's contribution to the NFTMO the AGM agreed to make her honorary president of the federation.

Westminster Developing a Fast Track to Local Control

For groups who want to take control of some local services, but can't or don't want to have a full Tenant Management Organisation, then there may be good news from an idea being pioneered in Westminster.

Local Management Agreements (LMAs for short) have been used by the City of Westminster since 1987 to give residents direct control over cleaning, caretaking, gardening and other estate services. The Council has made more than 50 agreements covering over 2000 homes.

As the name suggests, LMAs are locally negotiated agreements for residents to run particular services on behalf of the Council, in line with clear, agreed standards and costs. Tenants simply identify what services they want to run, consult the local community and then sign up to a special contract to take on responsibility.

Because - as far as we know - Westminster's approach is unique, the Council (and its new arm's length management organisation, CityWest Homes) have got an Innovation into Action grant from the Government to update the LMA model, and see if it can be spread to other areas.

Working with consultants, PPCR, CityWest Homes have produced a brand new "toolkit" for LMAs, which is designed to give tenants everything they need to decide on whether it's the right thing for them, and to negotiate and run a local agreement.

The only limits are:

- The service(s) must cost less than £150,000 per year to provide to the estate or area
- A majority of people in the area understand and support the change (or at least don't actively oppose it)
- The residents or group wishing to take over services can demonstrate their competence and ability to do the job.

The next stage of the project is to put the toolkit onto the Innovation into Action website so that anyone can pick it up and tailor it to match their own circumstances. CityWest Homes and PPCR plan launch event during 2003.

They also hope to get Government approval for the LMA model, so that it's no longer necessary to get individual Government consents for future agreements.

For more details of CityWest Homes' Local Management Agreements contact Mal McGirr, Residents Choice Manager at mmcgirr@westminster.gov.uk

Any bright ideas for involving tenants?



The Innovation into Action (IiA) grant programme can help you put them into practice.

IiA gives grants to projects which are aiming to improve tenants' involvement in how their homes are managed.

It is open to tenant groups, Tenant Management Organisations, Councils or other interested organisations who have proposals involving new approaches to tenant involvement in Council houses across England

IiA covers projects which take new approaches to involving tenants or which use existing approaches in a new way or situation. Remember that sometimes the simplest ideas can be very effective.

If you have an idea give the IiA team a call and we can tell you whether it fits in with the aims of the programme.

One of the many projects that is funded from this programme involves benchmarking for TMO's. This is being developed by Housemark in partnership with the National Federation of TMO's.

How do you apply?

You need to make an initial application to the IiA team at the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH). The CIH manages the grant programme on behalf of the government's Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

It's a good idea to talk to the IiA team before you apply as we can guide you through the process.

For more information contact: The Tenant Participation Team, Chartered Institute of Housing, Octavia House, Westwood Way, Coventry, CV4 8JP Tel: 024 7685 1734, e-mail: innovation@cih.org, or visit www.innovationintoaction.org where you will find examples of approved projects.