

# **WINDSOR ALBION HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE**

## **Equality - Democracy - Solidarity**

### **ANNUAL REPORT TO SALFORD CITY COUNCIL - 2021/2022**

#### **Introduction:**

Windsor Albion Housing Co-operative (WAC) is a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) in Pendleton, which was established in 1996 and has provided an excellent environment for the diverse population living on Culverwell Drive, Melksham Close, Trenam Place and the Albion Towers block.

The co-operative has a formal contract with the landlords, which sets out the housing services that are delivered locally and it has been responsible for the management of the finances allocated by the relevant landlords who fund the co-operative. These housing providers are Salix Homes who own Albion Towers and Irwell Valley Housing Association who own 24 of the houses across Culverwell Drive, Melksham Close and Trenam Place.

The co-operative has been responsible for the following areas of work:

- Providing a responsive day-to-day repairs service for 177 properties
- Providing cleaning and gardening services
- Dealing with voids and allocating properties
- All aspects of tenancy management
- Promoting community involvement.

Every tenant has had the opportunity over the years to become a member of the co-operative and be involved in its running, building a sustainable community to be proud of; one which is safe, inclusive and where people are considerate and support each other. Resident members elect fellow members to the board and WAC has always had a reputation as a friendly, helpful and accessible organisation which offers value for money services.

#### **Board Meetings and Members Meetings**

WAC Board meetings have usually taken place monthly adopting a hybrid approach. There are also 2 sub-committees; the Human Resources and Finance Committee and the Social and Welfare Committee.

A representative from Salix Homes and Irwell Valley Housing Association attend Board meetings. This past year, Sue Sutton (CEO Salix Homes), Liam Turner (Salix Homes), Nichola Sheppard (Irwell Valley Housing Association) and Tara Logan (Irwell Valley Housing Association), have attended. Additional guests have been Councillor Tracy Kelly (Statutory Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Housing, Salford City Council) and Alison Page (CEO, Salford CVS).

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was initially held face-to-face on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 2021 at St Paul's C of E Primary School, Cross Lane but was not quorate and had to be rescheduled. The meeting was reconvened on 'Zoom' on Oct 29<sup>th</sup>. An additional

face-to-face meeting was held with an Interpreter for those tenants/residents who are hard-of-hearing or living with deafness.

At the AGM, 3 members of the Board sadly resigned due to other commitments in their lives. We thank them all for their hard work and dedication over a number of years.

Unfortunately, WAC Board members have tried to recruit members with fresh ideas and new skills to join the Board but to no avail.

### **Board Members 2021/2022:**

- Tom Pritchard - co-opted at AGM 2021
- Jessica Brett - resigned Oct 2021
- Ruth Brett - elected at AGM 2021
- Julie Wilson - elected at AGM 2021 (Chair)
- Rachael Fitzgerald - resigned Oct 2021 (Social and Welfare Committee Chair)
- Paul Dennett - elected at AGM Oct 2021 (Secretary)
- Councillor Gina Reynolds - co-opted May 2021 (Council Representative and Vice-Chair since March 2020)
- Sammie Jenks - resigned Oct 21
- Wendy Budsworth - resigned July 21
- Jayne Davies - resigned July 21 (Treasurer)

### **Co-operative Staff Team 2021/2022:**

- Mica Kent (Operations Manager, left May 2021)
- Warid Uddin (Temp Operations Manager, June 2021 until July 2021)
- Chris Hill (Estate Officer)
- Angela Newns (Temp Cleaner, made permanent Sept 2021)
- Paul Bulcock (Security Officer)
- Paul Garvey (Security Officer)

### **Finance:**

The accounts have been maintained internally using 'Quickbooks' (license with Third Sector Accountants) and are audited as set out in the constitution, using an independent, external auditor arranged by Third Sector Accountants. Throughout the year, the TMO Treasurer oversees the accounts on behalf of the TMO and co-ordinates with the Operations Manager, Accountant and External Auditor to ensure legal compliance. The financial accounts have been in a healthy position during the past year.

### **Voids and Allocations:**

All WAC Board members have been involved in the allocation process of flats on Albion Towers and the houses on the estate. This is in order to give all WAC Board members the experience and training to be able to understand and be part of the allocation process. A scheme of delegation for voids and allocations has been revised and signed by members. The Operations Manager also has an input.

## **Maintenance and Repairs:**

The majority of the maintenance and repairs service is provided by Advanced Building. The heating system repairs are undertaken by Ground Heat. Some repairs are also undertaken by Salix Homes and Irwell Valley Housing. Occasionally it is necessary to use other companies.

The telephone contract is with Whitehorse and the contract for the printer is with Siemens.

## **Fire Safety Inspections:**

Fire safety inspections on Albion Towers are conducted by the Operations Manager, using a comprehensive Fire Safety Inspection Sheet. An independent Health and Safety Inspection is also carried out.

## **Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)**

A Business Continuity Plan has been developed, to ensure that the co-operative will continue to operate during the COVID-19 outbreak. The plan and all policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated during the past year. The Co-operative hope that everyone is keeping well during this difficult period. Staff have checked regularly on people's welfare and have provided them with support if needed. They have also provided residents with information regarding other avenues of support, including Salford City Council's Spirit of Salford Helpline. With regard to maintenance and repairs, during strict lockdowns only emergency repairs were being delivered.

## **Salix Homes:**

Since May 2021, Salix Homes Board members have recognised the commitment from WAC Board members to address the actions within the Supervision Notice issued on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and governance improvements with regards to the quality of Board meetings and recording. It was acknowledged that the day-to-day housing services were satisfactory. Monthly progress meetings have taken place with Salix Officers, the executive of WAC Board and the Interim Operations Manager. The CEO of Salix Homes has feedback to the Chair of Salix Homes Board on progress.

Unfortunately by July 2021, the Salix Homes Board did not feel that all the actions detailed in the Improvement Plan had been adequately addressed, to provide them with the assurance that the obligations within the management agreement were being delivered to their satisfaction. Following a Salix Homes Board meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021, tenants were sent a letter on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021 notifying residents of the decision to terminate the WAC/Salix Homes Management Agreement on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021. Salix Homes are now managing their properties on the estate and residents are directly contacting them re housing services. Staff were given the opportunity to TUPE to Salix Homes.

Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP have provided support in a legal capacity following advice from Salix Homes. Salix Homes are also willing to work with tenants on a new Community Engagement Model, focusing on community engagement and activities.

WAC feel that the Covid-19 pandemic created a challenging environment in which non-remunerated community volunteers had to juggle their commitments to WAC with paid employment, the additional pressure of protecting their health/wellbeing and supporting family, friends and loved ones during a period of lockdowns and restrictions. There has been 5 resignations from the WAC Board in the past year and some staff have left for pastures new. This has left a lack of capacity.

### **Irwell Valley Housing Association (IVHA):**

In-depth discussions with Irwell Valley Housing Association have taken place following the termination of the management agreement by Salix Homes. It became obvious at the end of Dec 2021 that it would not be viable to manage the 24 IVHA houses on the estate. On 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022 a breach notice was sent to all IVHA tenants/residents. As it was impossible due to lack of capacity, to address the points contained in the breach notice; a warning notice was issued after 21 days. I am saddened to say that a formal dissolution of WAC is expected by the end of June 2022.

### **Community Trips:**

- Southport - Aug 2021
- Whitby - Sept 2021
- Blackpool Illuminations - Oct 2021 - Children's trip
- Blackpool Illuminations - Nov 2021 - Adults/Seniors trip

### **Communication:**

Tenants have been kept informed during the year by WAC Board via written correspondence.

### **Past Members and Board Members:**

Our condolences go out to members of the WAC who have sadly passed away in the past year. Our heartfelt thoughts are with their families and friends

WAC Board members would like to thank former members who have left the Board during 2021/2022 and current members, for all their hard work and commitment over the years. They have given freely of their time and their dedication has been immense. We wish each and every one of them happiness and success for the future. We hope that tenants/residents will look at other options to continue to support this wonderful community in Pendleton.

**Councillor Gina Reynolds**  
**May 2022**

