

Welcome

to the first edition of our staff newsletter.

Thank you for taking the time to open and read this, our first staff newsletter, which has been created in response to an idea submitted by Associates at our company away day, held in Birmingham in June.

In this edition you can find out:-

- **What happened at the Open Communities Away Day**
- **An update on Tenant Empowerment Funding**
- **Meet the staff**
- **Company progress this year**
- **Update from Ireland**

Feedback from the Open Communities Away Day

First of all thanks to the 21 members of staff and associates from around the UK who attended our Away Day. We had people travelling from London, Yorkshire, Bristol, and of course Merseyside, to join our colleagues in Birmingham.

Workshops for the day included an update on the new Right To Manage Regulations and Common Assessment model (CAM), TSA co-regulation and the CIH Accredited Learning for Residents (ALfR) programme, presented by Ashraf Ahmed. Feedback from those who attended was positive and it was agreed at the end of the day that Open Communities needed to improve communication with associates and also look at ways to share experience and knowledge within the company. *Hopefully this newsletter is a step in the right direction!*

If you have any comments or suggestions for the next edition of the newsletter which we hope to issue at Christmas, please let me know and we will include your suggestion.



Tenant Empowerment Grant Update!

As most of you will know, CLG is carrying out a Comprehensive Spending Review and the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme is now under scrutiny as part of that review. CLG have told lead advisors that the review will form two parts for the TEG programme. The first phase will decide, in principle, if the TEP meets current Government objectives. This part of the review will conclude in October this year. Should the Government decide that the TEP programme meets the current government agenda within the 'Big Society' then a second phase of the review will then decide if there will be any changes to the current grant guidelines and grant administrator.

Clearly this is a worrying time for all of us in the sector. On a positive note Directors continue to negotiate with the TSA and have secured the majority of expected funding for this financial year. However next year may see a dramatic fall in TEP funding and therefore the potential income for Open Communities so Directors are currently keeping the position under review and are currently making plans for life without TEP. We will keep you informed of decisions during the course of the year.





Meet the staff.



As a regular news item I'd like to offer associates a little more information on staff within Open Communities. First in the spotlight is Barbara Bradshaw.

Barbara joined Open Communities in July as our Financial Controller. She replaced Juliet Knight who left us to find full time employment with the Brothers of Charity.

Barbara is a fully qualified accountant who normally works Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Barbara has joined us following some time off to start her family. Baby Olivia was born in April. Barbara has worked for a housing association before so knows something of the social housing sector and has made an excellent start to life with Open Communities.

Company update



Open Communities came into this financial year with a healthy financial position and a full order book for the year. Unfortunately with the uncertainty around the TEP funding and the need to renegotiate funding with the TSA, coupled with some regeneration projects stalling in London and the Midlands, due to the economic restrictions, our income is falling short of our targets. However we continue to win major new work in Scotland, and continue to work on existing contracts so the financial impact has been mitigated and we do continue to make profits in the first quarter of the year.

An update from Ireland



As some of you will know, Open Communities has a subsidiary company which operates in Ireland. Oscailte (Housing Management and Training Services) Ltd. has still yet to flourish, but we continue to work with our partner Voluntary Housing Association, Foras, and can report that we have supported Foras in obtaining planning permission to

construct an estate of 111 homes in Navan, County Meath, just outside Dublin.

Its hoped that construction on the Commons Road estate will start this financial year which will then start to generate income for both Oscailte and Open Communities.

