

Support through difficult times

2021-22 saw the Covid-19 pandemic still affecting our activities, although we did have a summer of relatively few restrictions. The LCA team continued to work with residents and contractors to minimise its impact. We appreciate your patience when we occasionally had to delay work and activities due to Covid safety measures.

From July 2021 we were able to resume our community activities and were delighted with the level of support and participation from our residents.

We look forward to offering many more trips and community events over the rest of 2022 and 2023.

We welcomed three new potential Board members towards the end of 2021-22, with Dr Selina Tour, Florian Nallbani and Naresh Bhatoe bringing their skills and experience to help us in our role of overseeing LCA's operations.

Making the Lyng a great place to live is one of our key aims, supported by our community activities which are designed to bring people together. Our 2021 seaside trip took 169 Lyng residents and friends to Blackpool. We were pleased to see neighbours coming together to enjoy a fantastic day out, after such a difficult time due to the pandemic.



Wendy Bodenham

2022 has brought rising energy prices following the invasion of Ukraine, against the existing backdrop of a need to reduce energy consumption to combat global warming.

Through all such challenges, we remain true to our principles and values, focusing on delivering services that matter to our residents while achieving value for money in all we do.

The Consumer Price Index, which measures inflation, rose by 7% in the 12 months to March 2022. This represents a real cost of living crisis for our residents and dealing with the effects of this will be our most significant challenge over the coming year.

As an organisation rooted in our local community, we will do everything we can to help you through these tough times. We are working to ease the impact of rising prices and will share our plans with you later this year.

Finally, I want to thank LCA's staff, my fellow Board members, our contractors and residents for helping us successfully navigate our way through another difficult and challenging 12 months.

Wendy Bodenham

Chair of Lyng Community Association

WORKING TOGETHER

In 2021 we launched our Together with Tenants Charter, a sector-wide initiative focused on strengthening the relationship between residents and housing association landlords.

We are pleased to report our progress in delivering on the charter's commitments in 2021-22.

1) Relationships

Our staff and contractors understand the need for respect in all our dealings with residents. We measure this through satisfaction surveys and regular contact with the community.

Later this year we will contact all residents for our regular Tenant Satisfaction Survey to assess how we are doing.

2) Communication

Our printed and online newsletters and reports keep you updated on issues relating to your home and community.

We also organise social events and trips where staff and Board members can chat informally to our residents.

3) Voice and influence

We have up to six places for tenants on our Board. In 2021-22 there were three tenant Board members who ensured your views remained at the centre of our decision-making process.

We are recruiting new tenant Board members, so would be delighted to hear from anyone wanting to join us.

4) Accountability

We are reviving our Tenant Panel, which allows all tenants to give their views in an informal setting. This is to ensure residents who do not want to join the Board can still have their say on operational and policy matters. Please let us know if you want to be part of the new panel.

5) Quality

Our Tenant Satisfaction Survey will include questions about our homes and the wider neighbourhood. Findings will shape our future investment decisions and allow us to respond to residents' concerns.

6) When things go wrong

We strive to address problems before they become complaints and this approach has paid off, with very few complaints over the past few years.

The Board fully supports our staff in taking proactive action when things go wrong, making sure we address issues quickly and change procedures to avoid similar problems in future.



Fun for all ages

Our community events and activities are a key part of LCA's work and play a crucial role in promoting a strong sense of community on our estate.

Some of the highlights of 2021-22 were:

- Our Toddlers Group raising over £400 for children's charity Barnardo's with the Big Toddle at West Midlands Safari Park
- A successful space-themed summer play scheme for 32 youngsters, culminating in a residential trip to the Frank Chapman Outdoor Education Centre in Bewdley

- Three coachloads of Lyng families and their friends having a day out to see Blackpool's famous illuminations
- Raising £600 for Macmillan Cancer Support with our annual coffee morning
- Christmas activities including a shopping trip to Telford, our popular craft day and a Toddlers Group outing to Sycamore Adventure playground in Dudley
- A group of 5-11 Club members visiting the Black Country Living Museum in February
- Over 100 Lyng residents and friends joining our spring day trip to Chester Zoo.



How are we doing?

Over the past year:

- 661 repairs were carried out (583 last year)
- 95% of these were completed on time (95.3% last year)
- 8 homes were re-let (6 last year)
- we had no empty homes at the end of March 2022 (same as last year)
- we lost 0.14% of our rent due to homes being empty (0.05% last year)
- rent arrears reduced to 3.15% (3.8% last year).

Turnover	£1,128,375 (£1,111,056 last year) – slightly increased due to 1.5% rent rise
Surplus	£331,945 (£360,235 last year) – reduced due to increased spending on repairs and community activities as pandemic restrictions eased, but still a significantly higher surplus than pre-2020
<i>This is used to provide services, cover repairs and further improve our community.</i>	

Average rent and service charges	
One-bedroom flat	£84.71 (£83.32 last year)
Two-bedroom flat	£94.35 (£92.84 last year)
Two-bedroom house	£94.81 (£93.39 last year)
Three-bedroom house	£103.80 (£102.25 last year)
Four-bedroom house	£118.86 (£117.09 last year)



Value for money

LCA is committed to achieving value for money (VFM) for our tenants and stakeholders, adopting a strategy setting out clear objectives on how this will be delivered – to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in everything we do.



Our overarching objectives are to:

- optimise use of our assets
- maintain efficient, effective services offering excellent value for money
- ensure tenants fully understand LCA's costs and how they compare with our peer group
- invest in enhancing our homes and developing new social housing
- remain financially strong, to maintain our viability and independence.

The strategy links to our Business Plan, ensuring VFM is embedded throughout the business and sets out measurable targets linked to LCA's aims and purpose. We aim to provide opportunities for tenants to help shape services and monitor their delivery and effectiveness.

Our Board monitors performance against VFM targets and uses comparable data from our peer group to benchmark our performance. The data we use (shown in the SBPM column in the table below) is from similar sized housing associations in the West Midlands and provided through Housemark Benchmarking, which offers the housing sector's most in-depth robustly validated data.

Our targets for 2021-22 included:

- 1) 100.6% rent collection – we achieved 100.6%, despite the pandemic's impact and restrictions on taking legal action to recover arrears. In light of the current economic climate, we hope to continue reducing arrears with a 100.3% target for 2022-23.

- 2) 99.59% homes occupied – rent loss was restricted to 0.14%, equal to 99.86% occupancy rate, mainly due to low turnover of tenancies. It is likely tenancy turnover will increase as uncertainty caused by the pandemic fades and people start looking to move home again.
- 3) 96% overall satisfaction rate with services – we achieved 97%. We conduct regular satisfaction surveys to see where we can improve and plan a full tenant survey later in 2022.
- 4) Ensure our headline social housing cost per unit is £3,830 or less – we achieved £3,563 but appreciate we need to continue improving.
- 5) Deliver 2.5% new homes over three years – we are seeking suitable sites in and around the Lyng estate but, as the area is highly developed, they rarely become available and prices reflect this.
- 6) Maintain community stability by keeping tenancy turnover under 10% – we achieved 4% by supporting residents to manage their tenancies effectively.
- 7) Reduce expenditure on dealing with litter, fly-tipping and vandalism by promoting community spirit with a range of activities – lockdown restrictions led to less community events but we will develop a realistic cash target for future years.

By reviewing expenditure, improving performance and seeking better value in procurement, we have enhanced our overall financial position by continuing to generate surpluses that can be earmarked for developing new homes in the near future.

Performance measure	2022	2021	2020	SBPM 2021 median	Notes
Reinvestment (how much we reinvested in our homes)	0.03%	0.10%	0.14%	0.22%	<i>This figure will increase when we start replacing old equipment and fittings in our oldest (2004) homes</i>
New supply – social housing	0%	0%	0%	0%	<i>We did not build any homes in 2020-22</i>
Gearing (ratio of loan capital to equity)	22.69%	32.07%	22.24%	11.8%	<i>Reflects LCA reducing its debt each year and improving its financial position</i>
EBITDA MIR (interest cover)	629.34%	601.42%	239.67%	356%	<i>Reduced interest payments continued to improve performance</i>
Overall social housing cost per unit (covers management, service charge, maintenance, major repairs and other social housing costs)	£3,563	£3,327	£3,387	£4,847	<i>Reflects increased maintenance and community activity costs as pandemic restrictions eased</i>
Operating margin – social housing lettings	36.23%	38.92%	38.51%	20.6%	<i>Increased spend on planned repairs and community activity, along with rents increasing by CPI plus 1%, led to a small reduction in operating margin</i>
Return on capital employed (rate of return from our housing assets)	3.34%	3.59%	3.45%	2.7%	<i>Reduced from last year but compares positively against other associations</i>

We assess our success in achieving value for money by comparing ourselves to similar sized social landlords. We identify areas for improvement, drawing up plans to ensure we match upper quartile performance of comparable housing providers.

We follow the Regulator of Social Housing's guidance to demonstrate how we constantly challenge and seek to improve our VFM performance.