

# Lyng celebrates milestone year



Wendy Bodenham

**This last year we celebrated the milestone of completing all 200 homes for affordable rent on the Lyng – almost 20 years after the grassroots residents' campaign was launched to breathe new life into the estate.**

The final 10 properties to be built in Leopard Lane were handed

over to Lyng Community Association (LCA), with new tenants moving in within days.

I was thrilled and proud to celebrate this achievement along with residents, LCA staff and fellow Board members.

Although LCA was officially formed in 2000, it was three years before then that a group of local people got together to look at how they could work with the council to regenerate the Lyng and create a real sense of community here.

So, along with completion of our building programme, I am delighted that our community development projects have also really taken off, building neighbourly spirit and pride in where we live.

But 2016-17 has not been without its challenges for LCA, as the second year of the government's social housing rent reduction has started to bite. In real

terms, taking into account inflation, this year-on-year 1% cut for four years means a drop in our rental income of around 15%.

But we are working with residents to rise to the challenges we

face, including the changes to welfare benefits which are affecting some of our tenants.

We recently carried out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey and will be using the resulting feedback to improve our services. Thank you to all our residents who took part.

Looking to the future, why not think about how you could play your part in the Lyng? We are keen to recruit more local residents to the LCA Board so please get in touch – we would love to hear from you.

**Wendy Bodenham**

*Chairman of Lyng Community Association*



Mum-of-two Zahra moves into one of our newest homes

## Youngsters lead the way

**Teenagers are helping to shape the future of our estate with the success of LCA's new youth club.**

The club was set up to provide fun activities for 10-18-year-olds on the Lyng but is very much youth-led, with members involved in organising their own programme of events.

Sessions aim to entertain the youngsters, build their self-confidence, develop their skills and offer a range of new opportunities to them.

We have recruited a project coordinator and youth worker to help run the club, which has been supported by a Children in Need grant of £112,925 over three years.



# Every penny counts

**At LCA we remain committed to our Value for Money strategy and demonstrating how we make the best use of every penny of our limited resources.**

We regularly review all our activities to reduce our spending and improve our income, reporting back on our progress each year.

## Improving income

- As all our income came from rents in 2016/17, we worked hard to reduce outstanding arrears and ensure rents were paid promptly. We managed to reduce our rent arrears from 6.3% to 5.5%, which is pleasing in a difficult financial climate but this figure is still significantly higher than the average for other housing associations.
- The aim of our Rent Arrears Management Policy is to take firm but fair action to ensure rents are paid on time as well as offering assistance to tenants who are struggling to pay. As part of this approach we provided welfare benefits advice and helped tenants make claims for additional benefits such as Discretionary Housing Benefit. However, we were disappointed to have to take legal action to evict tenants who failed to keep to their agreed payment plans.
- We also strive to reduce the rent we lose when homes stand empty after one tenant leaves and before a new tenant moves in. Over the last year we were fairly successful in doing this, with just 0.46% of rent lost – well below the average figure for smaller housing associations of 0.61%.
- LCA is exploring additional sources of income and in 2017/18 we will be managing estate services for the Lyng's communal areas, taking over responsibility from Barratt who will move off site once the development is complete.

## Reducing spending

- Last year we said that in 2016/17 we would look to make savings. As a result, we have arranged to reduce our public relations expenditure by over £4,000 a year.
- We successfully bid for Children in Need funding for a youth project covering the whole area, saving £15,000 per year.
- By reviewing our energy usage and moving to a new supplier, we will save £300 a year.
- We are saving £2,000 a year by continuing to use our in-house maintenance service, rather than a contractor, to repair our empty homes, and have carried out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey which will shape our services for 2017/18.



## Over the next 12 months we will:

- review our maintenance contractor service to ensure we are receiving value for money (we use Bourneville Property Care for our gas, electric and some more complicated repairs)
- replace our landscaping and external cleaning contractor, as many residents are dissatisfied with that part of our service and we feel it doesn't offer value for money
- start providing services to other organisations in order to bring in extra income, then look to expand those services more widely.

## How are we doing?

### Over the past year:

- 638 repairs were carried out
- 97% of these were completed on time
- 10 new homes were let for the first time
- 20 homes were re-let
- we had no homes empty at the end of March 2017
- we lost 0.46% of our rent due to homes being empty
- rent arrears stood at 5.5% at the end of March 2017.

### Turnover

**£1,078,314**

### Surplus

**£221,511**

*This is used to provide services, cover repairs and further improve our community.*

### Average rent and service charges

One-bedroom flat	<b>£82.63</b>
Two-bedroom flat	<b>£92.23</b>
Two-bedroom house	<b>£93.38</b>
Three-bedroom house	<b>£102.11</b>
Four-bedroom house	<b>£118.71</b>