

# **The Partnership Approach - Co-operation to the benefit of all.**

In October 2001 I received a letter from the Housing Services Department of Derby City Council. This explained the Council was proposing to pilot a partnering approach to the procurement, commissioning and carrying-out of works for the Door Entry Service and Maintenance contract 2002.

*Very briefly, partnering means that all parties involved become partners in the project - Housing Services, the preferred Supplier, his sub-contractors, his associates etc., as opposed to there being two parties to a contract - Housing Services and the preferred Supplier. All parties work together, so improving efficiency and minimising waste, thereby reducing costs. Should a problem arise, head to head confrontation is out, passing the buck is out, reading the contract small-print is out, sitting down together to resolve the situation and agree a solution is in. Hopefully, co-operation should be such that a situation should be picked up and resolved before it becomes a problem.*

Housing services first set up a 'principal group' made up of Housing Services staff, a tenant and myself - a leaseholder. The project is in two stages and we are working our way through Stage One. We started by attending a workshop on partnering which explained the principle and showed us the benefits of the parties concerned working as a team. We have, over a series of scheduled meetings and also by working at home, produced a detailed brief of the requirement which was sent to contractors who had indicated an interest in tendering for the project. Following receipt of tenders, we realised we needed to improve our requirement (remember, this was the first attempt at the partnering process and we were all on a learning curve). Contractors have re-tendered, we have evaluated the different responses and have made site visits as necessary. Our detailed report is now with senior members of the Council and once they have given us the go-ahead, we will appoint the selected contractor.

Stage Two of the project will then kick in - we will have discussions with the chosen contractors to finalise the setting-up and running of the contract. Reporting and monitoring procedures will be put in place which will cover both the work as it progresses and the spend as it occurs, so that we have a constant overview, both of the contractor to see if he is keeping to the time limits that were laid down, and of the spend to ensure that it remains within or below budget.

Is it a big time commitment? Is it hard work? Do I think everyone concerned - Housing Services staff, tenants, leaseholders, contractor - will benefit from this way of doing business? The answer is a very definite YES!

I have also learned a great deal about the way Housing Services goes about its' business, and have been very impressed with the dedication and capabilities of the staff who are in this particular group.

**Win Buchan - Boulton Panel Member**