

Why we should say...

NO to ALMO



Invest in council housing - with no strings attached

Public Meeting

7pm Tuesday September 17th

Clarence Way TA Hall

behind Quinns Public House (Kentish Town Rd / Hawley Rd)
nearest tube Camden Town

The government's plans to privatise council housing are meeting more and more opposition. Tenants are rejecting transfer sell-offs, so the government have come up with a new formula - Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). Camden council plans to 'consult' on the idea of ALMOs here.

ALMOs are not the same as transfer (see over). But they are designed to undermine winning more direct investment in council housing. They can and will be used to fragment tenants' organisation and head off demands for investment without any strings. That leaves the way open for the government to come back later to finish off their privatisation strategy in a two stage approach.

In Camden the official council line is that no decision will be taken unless tenants agree. However director of Housing Neil Litherland is clearly treating it as a done deal. In a letter to council staff on July 24th he says a de-

cision is likely "by the end of this calendar year", whilst admitting "it is not yet certain we will go down this route".

We can expect the usual hard sell campaign by the council for a Yes Vote. We need to make sure every tenant hears the arguments against.

Read the case against ALMOs (overleaf). Camden tenants should be urging our councillors to join us in putting pressure on government. We have won some important concessions already - if we stick together we can win more money for direct investment in council housing with no strings attached.

- **Invite a speaker to your next TA meeting**
- **Distribute this leaflet to everyone in your area**
- **Make sure a group of tenants from your estate/area come to the public meeting**

If there's money for ALMOs - why not for direct investment in council housing? What's the agenda?

Government wants to privatise council housing. ALMOs are a part of their strategy. We want direct investment - no strings

Ask yourself
"Why is this gov-
ernment pushing
ALMOs?"

The council says the only way to get enough money to do our repairs and improvements is to accept ALMOs. Are they right?

They have a habit of making the figures fit their political argument. That's exactly what they said in 1997 when they tried to push through privatisation with their 'New Opportunities' proposals.

Today the government still wants to get rid of council housing. Their preferred option is to transfer (privatise) all housing to Registered Social Landlords (mainly housing associations). But they are facing opposition from council tenants all around the country.

That's where the formula for ALMOs

(Arms Length Management Organisations) comes in.

To avoid conceding the demands for direct investment in council housing the government needs to split the opposition, which unites tenants, trade unions, MPs and councillors. Where they can't get privatisation through now they plan to divide us and come back later.



What's the risk?

ALMOs could be only a short term fix. Once the government has got all of us split up into separate companies and seen off the national campaign for more direct investment it would be much easier to complete the privatisation process.

Councillors keep stressing that we will stay as council tenants but where ALMOs are being introduced in other boroughs they are deliberately re-branding their services to make themselves look like something completely separate from the council. It's all part of a new 'corporate culture'. Ashfield Homes near Nottingham has leased new offices and Hounslow's housing has moved out of the Civic Centre.

Would tenants have any real say?

Some tenants reps like the idea of tenants making up a third of the ALMO board. It's a con!

Members of any company board are told that their sole duty is to run the company. Existing tenant reps are told they are not there to represent tenants. There are also real questions about how any reps would be kept accountable to all tenants.

ALMOs would give councillors an excuse that they don't have overall control (unlike council housing now where the buck stops with them). So-called 'independents' (usually professional accountants, solicitors, etc), would have a third of votes. Where would their interests lie?

Demand a fair debate and a vote

Of course councillors have a democratic right to propose ALMOs. They like us can print and distribute leaflets.

But they have no right to use our rents to fund their pro ALMO campaign!

Tenants should decide whether we even want an expensive debate.

As a principle there should be equal resources (leaflets, posters, speakers, etc) to debate the case For and Against any proposals and a ballot at the end.

Step up the pressure on government - secure a safe future for council housing!

The demand for a 'level playing field' (equal rights for councils, ALMOs and RSLs) is growing in strength.

The government has already been forced to concede that councils should have a new 'right to borrow' (something Camden officers and councillors denied was possible).

Prescott has now announced a complete review of housing finance. The consultative document *'The Way Forward for Housing Capital Finances'* has opened up a major debate that could give council housing access to investment without strings and guarantee a future without risk.

This is the time to step up our campaigning - not give in to blackmail.

In January tenants and trade unionists from around the country will be lobbying at Parliament to step up this pressure.

Camden tenants should demand that our councillors add to the pressure on government for direct investment in council housing with no strings attached.

The case for ALMOs

The government says ALMOs will be allowed to borrow extra money for investment and will get a bigger share of government funds. All this while tenants remain as council tenants and the council will still own our homes through the new company. ALMOs can run a maximum of 12,000 homes, so Camden would need at least three separate companies.

What's the real agenda?

The obvious question is if the government has extra money for ALMOs why won't it just let the council have the money to do the work itself?

What is the point of wasting money on setting up the new companies? How much of our rents would go on employing three sets of senior managers instead of the present one? What are the extra costs of duplicating finance, legal, personnel and other departments to replace existing central services? If there's no hidden agenda what are the reasons?

Council unions are also opposed to ALMOs because they can see the clear threat to services and jobs. Together we can defend and fight for investment in council housing for us and our children.

Demand investment in council housing - with no strings attached