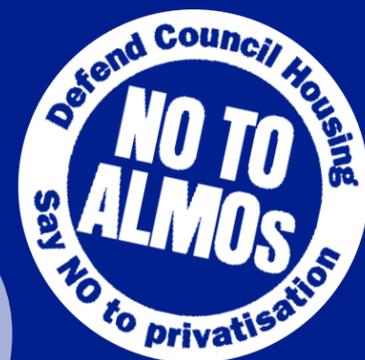


# HARINGEY DEFEND COUNCIL HOUSING

# VOTE NO TO ALMO



FEBRUARY 2005

**HARINGEY COUNCIL** wants to transfer the management of our homes into a separate, private company called an ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation). This is not a no-change option. Although technically the council will still own our homes, they won't run the ALMO.

The government wants to privatise council housing. They know that tenants in most major towns and cities won't accept a straight sell-off. That's why they have come up with this ALMO formula. We call it two-stage privatisation. They hope that if they can get us to agree to setting up a private company to run our homes it will be easier to sell them off at a later date.

Council housing may not be perfect but it has served us well for generations. As council tenants we have a special relationship with our landlord. If we don't like the way they manage our homes, we can vote them out at the next election. But the ALMO will be run by a board of directors who will be accountable to the company, not to the tenants. Just five tenants will be given the illusion of power by being given seats on the board. What about the rest of us?

For years governments have told us there is no money for improvements. Suddenly there is plenty of money – but only if we accept ALMOs. This 'new' money comes from tenants rents. Ask yourself: why can't the government give the extra money to the council direct – as tenants are demanding – unless they have a privatisation agenda?



Picture: Andrew Ward

Our campaigning has already forced concessions from the government. Since tenants in Camden voted NO to the ALMO last January, the national campaign has increased in strength and Ministers are under increasing pressure to concede direct investment with no strings.

**Vote No to ALMO and tell them we want direct investment in OUR HOMES!**

## THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE DIRECT INVESTMENT IN COUNCIL HOUSING

Haringey council's glossy propaganda doesn't tell us that they have £126 million of their own resources to spend on Decent Homes – half the money needed. They don't tell us they are redirecting £50 million of money that belongs to council housing to other projects... (see inside for details).

By voting NO we can keep our homes safe for future generations in public ownership and democratic control, have most of the work that we

need done on our homes, and join the national campaign to persuade the government to give us the rest.

There are more than 3 million council tenants in Britain and there is a huge and growing campaign involving tenants, trade unions, councils and over 250 MPs. Let's tell Haringey council to stop blackmailing us, hand over the money that belongs to council housing, and join the campaign to force the government to concede direct investment in our homes.

## 8 REASONS TO REJECT ALMOS

- 1** This government wants to privatise council housing – ALMOs are a key part of their strategy
- 2** Elected councillors will no longer be accountable for what happens to our homes. It's a recipe for excuses
- 3** A separate private company means less co-ordination between housing and other services – when we need more!
- 4** Tenants on the board will not be allowed to represent our interests – their hands will be tied by company law
- 5** Massive amounts will be spent on consultants, re-organisation and higher senior managers pay
- 6** Housing workers will lose out by being TUPE transferred. Staff turnover and demoralisation will affect the service
- 7** Haringey can do half the work out of its own resources and could raise a lot more – without going ALMO. There is no need to take the risk!
- 8** Winning direct investment without strings is worth fighting for. We've already won concessions. We can win much more!

This publication has been certified **FREE FROM ADDED PROFIT**  
No highly paid consultants, senior managers or ambitious politicians have been involved in this broadsheet

### A FAIR AND BALANCED DEBATE?

This broadsheet was entirely written by council tenants with the financial help of Haringey UNISON.

Haringey council and their consultants Mouchel Parkman are spending hundreds of thousands of pounds of our rents on their one-sided propaganda (see back for details).

The council have refused to allow us a fair debate so tenants can hear all the arguments, against as well as for the ALMO. What are they afraid of?

# TWO-STAGE PRIVATISATION OF COUNCIL HOUSING



**Q** If the government has extra money for ALMOs why can't they give it to the council direct?

**A** Their agenda is privatisation.  
Don't take the first step – VOTE NO to ALMO

## TENANTS WILL HAVE LESS POWER UNDER AN ALMO

The council claims that having tenants on the ALMO Board will give tenants more power. This is a con!

At the moment individual tenants and tenants associations can lobby their local ward councillors and – as Sheffield and other tenants have done – vote them out.

The Board of Directors setup gives us a few token tenants, but they will be in a minority and their hands will be tied by company law. Ward Councillors will have the perfect excuse to blame the ALMO – and say there is nothing they can do.

Tenants who sit on the boards of ALMOs and Housing Associations find they are gagged. They are constantly told the information they receive is 'in confidence' and they can't publicise it. Many who have spoken out for the interests of tenants have been kicked off the board.

The Audit Commission has criticised

councils for "mis-selling" the role of board members: "tenants are often led to believe they will have an explicit role in representing the interest of their fellow tenants on the board" when really "the directors responsibility takes supremacy". (*Improving Services Through Resident Involvement*, June 2004).

And a recent study by a researcher from Oxford Brookes University concluded that tenants on boards are "marginalised" and "powerless", and that boards are manipulated and controlled by senior managers. (*Changing Boards, Emerging Tensions* Spring 2004).

This isn't tenants power. A strong, independent tenants movement, with tenants associations in every estate and street, is a much more effective defence of tenants' interests.

### Conflict of Interest?

Don't you think there is a conflict of interest when the senior managers who are pushing for an ALMO are likely to benefit personally from pay rises if the new company is set up?

### What is an ALMO?

An Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) is a new company set up to manage our homes. ALMOs are classed as private companies under company law. A board of directors including tenants, councillors and 'independents' will run the company. At the start the council will own the company and we will remain as council tenants.

The whole debate is about how long this situation will last. The ALMO contract is only for five years. Our argument is that setting up the ALMO company makes it easier for the government to get their way and privatise our homes completely.

"The Labour Party Conference; the majority of Party members; the majority of Council Tenants; and most Councillors across the country want Council Tenants to be able to stay with the Council, but the ODPM ignores this. It is obvious to everyone that the Government wants to sell off, or 'park' Council properties in ALMOs until they can be sold on, in order to make it easier to abolish local councils after they have been 'asset stripped'. We are seeing preparations for the 'Quango State' of undemocratic, unaccountable, unelected bodies, such as Housing Associations, running our lives."

■ Councillor Thomas Davidson

## HOW MUCH WILL IT ALL COST?

**It is wrong that the council is using our rents to pay for its glossy pro-ALMO campaign.**

Half a million pounds that could be spent improving our homes is being wasted on consultants, glossy brochures, a roadshow, and giant adverts in the tube station, all to promote a private company that tenants have already said we don't want. They plan to waste more of our money on show homes. Money that could be spent doing the repairs we need!

To add insult to injury, the glossy brochures make misleading promises. Not only do they understate the amount that the council is able to spend out of its own resources – but they also imply that with an ALMO all estates will get a whole list of environmental improvements. That's dishonest – it's simply not feasible out of the £6million of ALMO money allocated for environmental work.

**"Tenants must be given a real choice for their future including staying with the local authority. Voting for the fourth option should not condemn tenants to sub-standard properties. We believe ALMOs are bad for the future of our members and for the tenants."**

■ Sean Fox, Haringey UNISON

## USE YOUR VOTE

The council would like tenants to believe that the outcome of this ballot is inevitable – but it isn't.

An effective campaign can win the argument. The NO Vote in Camden shocked Ministers and housing policy makers and made MPs sit up and take notice.

If Haringey tenants vote NO too then the government is under real pressure to give us Direct Investment – with no strings attached.

## IN THIS BALLOT EVERY VOTE COUNTS

## SEPARATE COMPANY MAKES NO SENSE

Hiving off housing into a separate company will make co-operation across council departments more difficult. Housing has a direct effect on our health and our children's education. It makes no sense to create a separate 'housing company'. It will make 'joined up thinking' more difficult when housing managers are following a separate 'company agenda'.

## What you can do...

It is wrong that the council is using our rents to pay for its pro-ALMO campaign (glossy brochures, mailshots to tenants, information vans, press adverts, videos, consultants, staff time, etc). We have to rely on donations from TAs, trade unions, and individuals to put the case against.

If you agree there should be a fair debate:

- Distribute this broadsheet to every council home
- Put up posters in your area
- Organise a meeting and invite a DCH speaker
- Raise money to pay for the campaign
- Most important... talk to your family, friends and neighbours and get them to VOTE NO

If you can help – get in touch:

Ring: 020 8888 7836, Email: pauln22@beeb.net

Write: c/o UNISON, 48 Grand Parade, Green Lanes, N4 1AG

Haringey DCH hold meetings on the 3rd Tuesday every month (15th Feb, 15th March, 19th April) at the Wood Green Labour Club, 3 Stuart Crescent, N22 (opposite the Civic Centre). ALL WELCOME

Belediye konutlarını yönetmesi önerilen ALMO (Arm's Length Management Organisation, yani Uzaktan Yönetim Kuruluşu) en başından itibaren özel bir şirket olacaktır. ALMO planı binlerce konutun hemen Konut Derneklerine (Housing Association) aktarılmasını öngörmektedir. Konutların özelleştirilmesine karşı çıkan kiracılara siz de katılın. ALMO'ya HAYIR oyu kullanın!

## MOUCHEL PARKMAN: FULLY EXPLOITING COUNCIL TENANTS

**Haringey's so-called "independent tenant advisors" are a firm up to its neck in multi-million privatisation deals.**

Consultancy firm Mouchel Parkman have been appointed as the "Independent Tenants Advisor" for the future of our 20,000 homes.

With a £724 million order book, Mouchel Parkman are taking over public services wherever they can. They hold management contracts for 11,000 council homes in Hackney and almost 2,000 in Westminster (subbed out with 'CityWest Homes' ALMO!!), and are also running signalling contracts on the tube.

Mouchel Parkman say that they want to "exploit the opportunities" of the public-private partnership marketplace. We might as well ask highway-



men about crime prevention!

The "Independent Tenants' Advisor" will take £80,000 of the half million cost of the Stock Options Appraisal – and all from Haringey tenants' rents. (Source: www.mouchelparkman.com)

For more information contact Haringey Defend Council Housing TEL: 020 8888 7836 WRITE: c/o UNISON, 48 Grand Parade, Green Lanes, N4 1AG

EMAIL: pauln22@beeb.net SEE ALSO National WEBSITE www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

Thanks to Haringey UNISON and UNISON's General Political Fund for sponsoring this broadsheet so tenants hear the case against ALMOs

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