

Swansea Defend Council Housing

VOTE NO

to Privatisation



Across the UK councils under pressure from government are trying to privatise council housing. Now Swansea is having a go! But they're facing massive opposition. Tenants are campaigning against with the support of the Welsh TUC, the main trade unions and councillors, MPs and AMs from all parties.

There have already been No votes this year in Waveney, Cannock Chase, Selby and Mid Devon in England. Edinburgh rejected transfer before Christmas in Scotland and there are campaigns opposing sell-offs in many other UK authorities due to ballot.

Council housing – worth fighting for

Council housing is far from perfect and our homes and estates need urgent improvements. But the principle of decent, affordable, secure and accountable council housing has served generations well. It's worth defending for us and our children. We won't trade our secure tenancies, lower rents and an elected landlord for a new kitchen or bathroom. We are entitled to both!

The money is there. Stop the robbery

Government has been systematically siphoning off a massive profit from our rents and the income from 'right to buy' sales. This should be spent on improvements to council housing. Nearly £100 million – a quarter of the rents from Welsh tenants – is taken each year. This is on top of the £1.5 billion English tenants are losing.

Councils are also offered a 'debt write-off' bribe to privatise our homes. The Treasury could use this money instead to allow councils to do the improvements direct.

Government under pressure to change policy

The government are hoping that tenants will just 'roll over' and accept the bullying and blackmail. But Ministers are under real pressure to concede direct investment – what's known as the 'Fourth Option'. More elected politicians now support the campaign, the Labour Party conference has twice voted for direct investment and a third vote is likely this September. There's a working group currently addressing the issue and Ministers have recently published a new discussion paper and set up a pilot scheme to investigate alternative options.

We're fighting for government to enable councils to carry out the improvements we need – and we're determined to win!

A No Vote in Swansea stops the privatisation and steps up the pressure on politicians to change the rules and fund direct investment.

What kind of animal is a 'Community Mutual'?



Supporters of selling off council housing claim it's not privatisation - they're wrong. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are private companies in law and will borrow against your homes.

'Community Housing Mutuals' are no different. They're a wrapper meant to sound more 'tenant friendly' to con us into accepting sell-off. They're the same animal underneath.

Members of the board (including tenants) are legally obliged as company directors to look after the interests of the company – not tenants. Handing out individual shares doesn't make any difference. Do individual shareholders in any big companies really feel they're in control?

The experience in other areas is that RSL landlords are unaccountable. Increasingly they are subject to mergers and takeovers creating massive multi million pound empires across the UK. Not local.

In practice the banks make the key decisions to safeguard their loans. Homes often get demolished and land sold off for private housing to bring in more income.

The new landlord makes a contract with the council not individual tenants. So if their business plan goes pearshaped, they break their promises or get taken over – tenants are stuffed. Remember there's no going back to the council if it goes wrong.

They say the new landlord will be 'not for profit'. So is BUPE – would you want private interests running the NHS?

Can you smell a rat?



DON'T BE BLACKMAILED INTO PRIVATISATION
Demand direct investment to improve our homes and estates.
Remember there's no going back if the new company goes pearshaped!

This campaign needs your help now! See over >

Demand direct investment

Read the small print and don't trust the promises

The council's official 'Offer Document' sent to every tenant is one-sided, slick pro transfer propaganda. There's no facility for tenants opposed to privatisation to put our case.

● Even the council admit they've got £176 million to fund improvements. The document also reveals "The cost... is higher than the rental income that these homes would generate, but the National Assembly for Wales would provide funding to bridge the gap." Equal gap funding to Swansea Council would fund additional work too.

● They point out that each year

Bridgend 'Valley to Coast' shows risk

Valley to Coast, the new landlord in the only authority in Wales to sell its homes, has been heavily criticised by the Wales audit office.

They found "Stock condition is poor" and "Performance for the completion of repairs is weak and deteriorating...".

the council pays £8 million in debt funding and loses £4 million in a levy to the Assembly. If the council got equal treatment with the private landlord and this robbery was stopped the improvements could be fully funded without the risk of privatisation.

● The council say their figures are based on estimated costs of the improvement work required. But many councils deliberately talk up the costs so as to persuade tenants their is no alternative but to sell the homes off. Are Swansea's figures right?

● The document tells us that "Your key rights as a Secure Council Tenant would be fully protected". But they are taking away our 'Secure Tenancy' and replacing it with an 'Assured Tenancy'. In law they are not the same and tenants often lose out.

● The council is trying to make out that every tenant will get major improvements but the 'Offer Document' says "The package of works that each home would receive if transfer goes ahead would depend

on its current condition".

Ask yourself what exactly have they guaranteed to me – and by when exactly?

● Laughably, they claim "The National Assembly for Wales has the power to intervene if those standards are not being met". But what would they do if promises are broken by the new landlord and they are told the money had run out? The likely answer is a takeover by another private company!



VOTE NO

It's time elected politicians stood up for our interests instead of stuffing government policy down our throats. Don't let them off the hook. Vote NO and demand the council and Welsh Assembly put their weight behind the campaign to win direct investment in council housing.

This campaign needs your help...

Unlike the council we can't pay for consultants and others to go door to door or produce glossy brochures. It's a scandal how much of our rent is being wasted on promoting privatising our homes!

Ask yourself why hasn't there been a 'fair and balanced'

★ **Talk to your family, friends and neighbours**

★ **Help distribute this leaflet and other material to homes where you live**

★ **Take leaflets to work, clubs, launderettes, church, mosques and other public places to make people aware**

debate so that tenants can hear both side of the argument. What are they afraid of?

We need to make sure that every tenant gets to hear the case against transfer and is aware that government has funds it could use to carry out the improvements we need.

★ **Organise a public meeting in your area so that tenants can hear both sides of the argument**

★ **Put up a campaign poster in your window**

★ **The ballot will start very soon. Get in touch now! We need your help urgently**

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