

TENANTS WATCH

TENANTS WORRIED ABOUT THE TRANSFER OF OUR COUNCIL HOMES

Vote NO to Privatisation

Reject the blackmail! Waverley council say the only way to get our repairs and improvements done is to accept transfer to another landlord. But they don't tell us about the risks, or about the alternative.

The council has more money available than it admits to which it could spend on our homes (see over). On top of that the government steals £8m a year from Waverley tenants' rents - and there is a big national campaign fighting to stop this robbery. If the money is there for 'Weyfold Community Homes' to do the work - why can't government allow the council to invest in council housing as tenants want?

Tenants voting NO to privatisation have put Ministers on the back foot. Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, said in October 2004 "Public financing of housing doesn't treat local authorities on a level playing field and I want to see that changed and I promised to do that and look at an inquiry into

it". He has since tried to wriggle out of this commitment but all over the country council tenants, backed by trade unionists and many MPs and councillors, are building a massive campaign to win investment for council housing. 92 councils around the country have already chosen to do what their tenants want and keep their homes in public ownership and democratic control. Delegates at the Labour Party conference in Brighton last month voted almost unanimously for a motion that "calls on government to provide the 'fourth option' of direct investment to council housing as a matter of urgency".

Nearly three million council tenants and our supporters are a force to be reckoned with. Together we can win equal rights for council housing - direct investment with no strings.

Here are eight good reasons to vote No:

EIGHT GOOD REASONS TO REJECT TRANSFER...

1 Evictions Up

We lose our 'secure' tenancies, which will be replaced by 'assured' tenancies - these have less rights in law and make eviction easier.

2 Rents Up

Housing Association rents are higher than council rents - 20% on average and sometimes 58% more.

3 Extra Service charges

On top of the new rent are additional 'service charges' which can be increased at any time.

4 No accountability

Council tenants get to vote for their landlord in local elections every 4 years. RSL Boards are accountable to no one and dominated by the banks and lenders

5 More homeless

Shelter, the homeless charity, reports that 43% of councils after transfer said they were having trouble getting the new landlords to deal with homeless applications

6 Massive setup costs

Transfer in Waverley will cost £3 million. This money could be used instead to carry out the repairs and improvements tenants need!

7 Higher borrowing costs

Councils can borrow much cheaper than Housing Associations. Transfer means more of our rents going on profits for the banks rather than repairs to our homes

8 No return to the council

Transfer is a one way ticket - there's no going back to the council if promises are broken. RSLs make lots of promises but what happens if they go bust?



If you transfer to a housing association - you can't come back. It's a one-way ticket. We should defend and improve council housing for our children and for future generations - it's their right as well as ours.

We want investment - not privatisation

The council is holding a gun to our heads - they say money will be spent on our homes only if we vote for transfer. That isn't choice - it's blackmail. Tenants in Waverley have already told the council we don't want privatisation - we voted NO in July 2000. Politicians should be ashamed.

Keep rents affordable

It costs more for RSLs (Registered Social Landlords like Weyfold Community Homes) both to improve and to build new homes. The National Audit Office says it costs £1,300 per home more to improve homes after transfer than if the council did the work themselves. Its not surprising then that rents are higher (20% higher than council rents on average across the country). The average rent for a new RSL property in Waverley is £85.29 a week, 24% higher than the comparable rent with Waverley council. We certainly need more homes in Waverley - but council homes with rents our children can afford!

No accountability - greater risk

RSLs borrow on private markets at higher rates - more of our rents will go on interest payments. Instead of elected local councillors making decisions un-elected and unaccountable businessmen and bankers will be pulling the strings.

Takeovers are becoming commonplace and are encouraged by government. Far from being 'local' community



What's The Alternative?

Staying with the council doesn't mean no investment and our homes aren't going to fall apart if we reject privatisation.

Waverley council has changed their estimate of the costs of Decent Homes three times so its hard to trust anything they tell us in the glossy propaganda. In addition they are not telling us the truth about how much money they have to spend.

There are more resources that the council could use towards Decent Homes if they chose to - £15m from prudential borrowing; and £11.7m from useable right to buy receipts (Figures from a financial report done by HQN for Waverley council). Yes the government withholds three-quarters

of right-to-buy money, but the council have £11.7m that they are allowed to use - but have chosen not to. This money belongs to council housing!

Nationally there's more than enough money available to do all the improvements we need. The government steals £8m a year from our rents in Waverley alone, £1.5 billion a year from council tenants across the country. Tenants call this robbery and there is a big national campaign fighting to stop it, backed by trade unions, many councillors and MPs.

Tell Waverley council we expect them to back the democratic decision tenants made in 2000 and join the campaign for direct investment in our homes - vote NO to transfer!

based organisations the sector is increasingly £multi million national businesses paying telephone number salaries to their top executives.

The Audit Commission (government inspectors) criticised councils in July last year for 'mis-selling' the role of tenant board members. They point out any tenants on the boards are legally responsible to the company, not the people who elected them. This isn't tenants power - it's a con.

Lots of RSLs get into financial trouble; 1 in 5 have had to be put under supervision by the Housing Corporation. The risks increase as they 'diversify' into private projects like building luxury homes. Look what happened to Pavilion, the transfer RSL in nearby Rushmoor - they had to be taken over by Atlantic to save them from financial

disaster.

Lots of promises - no guarantees they will be kept

Glossy pamphlets promise massive improvements but these promises are not always kept. The promises in the offer document are not legally enforceable by tenants - only by the council.

Nearly 7 out of 10 tenants who have transferred from councils to alternative landlords consider services to have either stayed the same or got worse, according to a survey from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. That's after the improvements!

If Weyfold gets taken over then the new landlord will be under no legal obligation to keep the promises made to you in the offer document.

Don't take the risk! Vote NO

HELP THE CAMPAIGN

We can't use the rent account to pay for glossy publicity. This leaflet was written and distributed by council tenants, because we want to make sure that tenants get to hear the arguments against as well as for transfer. We need your help - talk to friends and neighbours, help leaflet and put up posters. To help, or for more information, contact:

Tenants WATCH Tel: 01252 724664 Email: j.hyman@tiscali.co.uk

Or you can contact the national Defend Council Housing campaign:

Tel: 020 7987 9989 **Email:** info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
Website: www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

Demand investment in council housing - with no strings attached