

DEFEND COUNCIL HOUSING

1300+ join lobby and rally

At least 1300 tenants, trade unionists and councillors, from over 90 areas across the UK, took part in the Lobby of Parliament and rally for the 'Fourth Option' on 8 February.

The campaign is growing and the government's position is less and less sustainable!

Feb 8th strengthened the resolve of tenants, councillors and trade unionists to resist the government's three options of transfer, PFI or ALMOs and to press home the demand for the 'Fourth Option' – direct investment.

Speakers reported signs that Ministers now recognise the need to respond constructively.

Before Christmas the Council Housing group of MPs met ministers David Miliband and Yvette Cooper, who agreed to look at our financial arguments in details and meet again.

Informal discussions indicate Ministers are now looking at how to change policy.

Tenants want this sooner rather than later!

Tenants, elected councillors and council workers in around 250 local authority areas would benefit from the 'Fourth Option'. It can be funded from the money government currently siphons off tenants' rents and the profits from 'right to buy' sales and other capital receipts.

Council housing is cheaper to build, manage and maintain than the alternatives. Extra investment would effectively tackle the growing housing crisis, and the Treasury could save on Housing Benefit costs.

The formulas discussed at the 2004 Labour conference provide a framework: allow all good performing councils to access additional investment – without the requirement to set up ALMO companies; provide support to other authorities to improve their performance, and ring-fence all the money from tenants' rents, capital receipts and debt write-off to fund the 'Fourth Option'.



The platform of 32 speakers, chaired by Austin Mitchell MP, represented the broad range of MPs, councillors and union leaders supporting council tenants. Speakers included: Tony Benn, MPs Michael Meacher, Frank Dobson, Gerald Kaufman, Kate Hoey, George Galloway, Kelvin Hopkins, Paul Holmes, Jeremy Corbyn, Alan Simpson and Gavin Strang; union leaders Derek Simpson (Amicus), Keith Sonnett (UNISON), Jack Dromey (T&G), Billy Hayes (CWU), Chris Baugh (PCS) and Chris Murphy (UCATT). Senior councillors from a range of authorities joined tenants to make a broad platform.



250 authorities will benefit from 'Fourth Option'

250 local authorities – and their tenants and workers – have an interest in winning the 'Fourth Option'.

98 authorities have opted for 'stock retention'. They need additional investment to improve homes and estates.

A further 98 have yet to make a decision. Many face stiff opposition to proposed housing transfer or ALMOs.

Nearly 50 authorities have gone ALMO. Tenants were told this was only in order to get extra investment and the ALMO contracts expire after five years. The 'Fourth Option' guarantees that they can revert back to direct council management which prevents two-stage privatisation and is what tenants want.

Astonishing PLP Briefing re-writes conference policy

Labour MPs were shocked to receive an ODPM PLP briefing on Wednesday claiming "Conference did not vote for the so-called '4th Option'."

At Labour's September national conference in September 2005 Composite 8 was passed overwhelmingly, after coming top in the CLP Section priorities ballot. The composite "calls on government to provide the 'Fourth Option' of direct investment to council housing as a matter of urgency." It couldn't be clearer!



If your council is promoting transfer, PFI or ALMO contact DCH to help organise a campaign against. And if your council is retaining its homes join the campaign to win the 'Fourth Option' to provide a secure future for council housing.