

KUSH: There's quite a lot of work needs doing to some homes to get them up to the 'decent standard', and the government says if we agree to this takeover by a housing association, they'll give an £85 million subsidy in 'gap funding' to the new association to do that work. So why can't they just give the council the money and be done with it?

JACK: Absolutely. 'Gap funding' is the difference between what rents bring in and the cost of the work that needs doing for the 'decent standard' over the next five years. Why should you lose your council tenancies for that? Council housing's been robbed of proper funds for decades.

EARL: Besides that, our council, like most others, still has a debt from borrowing to build houses, from years ago. That £143 million of debt would be written off with transfer. If the government can afford to do that for a housing association, why can't they do it for councils, and so put our council in a better financial position to do up the housing?

JIM: We're told there'd be £195 million for repairs and improvements. It's how much we need for central heating, kitchens etc., and added on is the money for day-to-day repairs and extras, like door-entry systems. But, why can't our rents cover this? There's £36 million a year from our rents, plus over £2 million in government subsidy. Five years worth of that would cover the £195 million, if the council's debt were written off. No-one's telling the tenants that and I can't help feeling we're having the wool pulled over our eyes.

JACK: Yes, council housing can be fully self-financing. UNISON's calculated the backlog of work needed to meet the Decent Homes Standard can be easily paid for out of the £2 billion surplus that's generated annually by council housing nationally. The government's got to stop siphoning off money from it and give us a level playing field with housing associations that don't have the same restrictions on their borrowing.

KUSH: I'm very worried tenants have been given the impression that either we agree to stock transfer, or there's no money at all. But even the council's figures say that with current spending levels there'd be £110 million anyway! Their figures keep changing – they seem to want to confuse us. But on their website they say £177 million is needed for the next five years. So the government would write off a £143 million debt for a housing association, and pay them £85 million directly, rather than lend the council £67 million, or whatever, to let us keep council housing. What madness! It's not about what makes economic sense at all.

JIM: It's blackmail to say "You can have the money, but only if you vote the way we think is best". Now they're arm-twisting us, with talk of no decorating or gardening help for elderly tenants, if we vote 'NO'. I think that's disgraceful. The

TENANTS TALK HOUSING FINANCE

Earl Holmes-Raynor of Wiltshire House, Brighton, Kush Khundakar of Ellen House, Hove and Jim Clayton from Mountbatten Court, Hove met with Councillor Jack Hazelgrove (ex-chair of the council's Housing Committee) to discuss the ins and outs of housing finance.



EARL: They even crow about a rent "guarantee" we'd get, which when you work it out is twice the rate of inflation! What happens when the guarantee ends? Look at Hastings - their association's put up rents 10% in a single year. There'd be no point in complaining - tenant board members are answerable to the board, not to the tenants.

KUSH: Originally they wanted £120 million for gap funding. Yet the government's cut it to £85 million, which means a huge amount of borrowing to bring it up to £195 million.

JIM: How can they make it work now? Unless rents are higher, or they get rid of some places that are costly to do up, like high-rise and sheltered accommodation, or some stock is sold off.

JACK: Traditionally, housing associations have always charged higher rents to cover the cost of borrowing on the private money markets and this is passed on to tenants. Public borrowing makes sense – it's cheaper. Councils pay less interest than housing associations.

EARL: I've noticed too, that there are no guarantees on rents for new tenants, so they'll have to pay the higher rents, right from the start. It hardly seems fair that as a new tenant, you'll have to pay a higher rent than is paid on an identical house next door. The poor people on the waiting list – no one's asking them what they think of this!

JACK: It's high time the council listened to the wider tenant voice, not just the 'select few' who've been misled. You should keep the future generations of this city in mind. I think they'd want us to keep council housing, don't you?

council currently doesn't spend a single penny of the Right-to-Buy money (£2 or £3 million a year!) on our housing, yet they've got the nerve to bully some of our most vulnerable tenants!

KUSH: They've already spent between £1 and £2 million on this whole business. That's a lot of central heating systems and kitchens that could have been installed, and with this waste being repeated up and down the country, it's nothing short of a scandal.

EARL: We hear a lot about a "not-for-profit housing organisation", but it's obvious it's a case of 'nice-money-if-you-can-get-it', for some people - consultants and PR companies, not to mention the banks.

JACK: I'm very worried about whether this proposed new association's finances would work. Frankly, it seems to be planned rather on a wing and a prayer. They'll have to pay an awful lot of borrowed money back in a short period of time. By year 10, 'Brighton and Hove City Housing' would have a cumulative debt of £128.7 million.

Defend Council Housing in Brighton & Hove

www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk



VOTE NO! FOR BETTER COUNCIL HOUSING

VOTING 'NO' to the proposed takeover of council housing by a housing association is the way to make a brighter future for housing in Brighton and Hove.

Tenants know that council housing, with its low cost and democratic control, has stood the test of time in this city. They want the government to wake up and build more council housing, so that everyone who needs it could benefit, too.

If you're reading this newspaper you're lucky! The council don't want you to know that Defend Council Housing is a huge national campaign, making headway with government, or that in 123 other local authorities already, tenants are staying with council housing. They refused to give us addresses of the city's council homes (we applied for these under the Freedom of Information Act) in a desperate attempt to stop tenants from hearing the truth, that...

...There is an alternative to stock transfer which means we can get the kitchens, central heating and whatever else our housing needs, without giving up on public ownership, accountability, and the best tenancy of any in rented housing - a secure one!



'Chuck' Berry from Whitehawk, with daughter Sam, son-in-law Marcus and grandsons Daniel and Jack (from Hollingbury) says, "We need our council housing for the future generations of this city".

DIRECT INVESTMENT

The Fourth Option – direct investment in council housing, is the solution to the funding problems of council housing. It's common sense to every tenant that something as important as council house building should be funded from the public purse, and that our repairs and improvements are easily covered by our rents. The council is lying when it tells you that no improvements are possible unless you vote for a housing association. Money has been unjustly taken away from council housing for decades, and not spent on the housing for which it was intended.

WAITING LIST

Nationally, one million children live in unfit homes. Locally, there is a waiting list of 5,000 applicants for council housing, most of which are families, so the total number of people who need council housing is huge. Stock transfer is an evil diversion from this problem. The neglect of council housing nationally over

the last thirty years is shameful. Millions of pounds are being wasted, trying to persuade unwilling tenants to hand over their council tenancies, to what are basically private companies. It's like re-arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic!

FIGHT

Don't let housing go the same way as the post offices, railways, schools and hospitals that are suffering the disastrous effects of privatisation. Our council need clear instruction from tenants that we expect them to fight with us, to keep our housing public and get the improvements we deserve.

Now, council housing needs your vote to defend it. Remember, if we allow it to be voted away, there's no going back when direct investment from the government is won. So don't be a 'don't know':

Voting 'NO!' is your Vote For Council Housing.

RENT RISE SECRETS LEAKED

HAVE YOU FELT REASSURED recently by the Council's 'promise' of a 'rent guarantee' if transfer to a Housing Association goes ahead? If so, there's something you should know.

Leaked memos between Tony Bird of TPAS (the 'Independent Tenant Advisor'), and government officials confirm what we've long suspected: **hefty rent rises are the only guarantee you'll get**, and Mr. Bird is very far from independent.

The leaks show how concerned he was to discover that Housing Associations can choose from several rent valuation

methods, thereby allowing much higher rents. In his words this is "not good news for tenants".

You might think he'd be anxious to let us tenants know about this. But no, he kept it to himself whilst emailing the government to complain that, "this extra rent increase represents a **threat** to the (stock transfer) project."

Back came the government official's damning reply: **"We no longer consider rent guarantees to be meaningful."** (!)

And that admission, no doubt, is also staying firmly under Mr Bird's hat.

CONTACTS: DCH, c/o 43 Wiltshire House, Lavender St, Brighton BN2 1ZE

📞 Sean: 677201, Dave: 620815

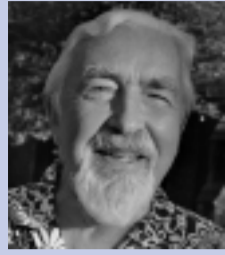
💻 Jane: jerin279@hotmail.com

...WE CAN WIN... DON'T FORGET TO VOTE... BALLOT PAPERS OUT SOON... LATEST COUNCIL SURVEY RESULTS: 78% SAY NO!...

Supported by **UNISON**
the public service union

TENANTS VOTE NO!

A MESSAGE from
Moulseccomb councillor Francis
Tonks, deputy chair of the
Housing Management Sub-
Committee, who has loyally
supported our campaign from
the beginning...



"Not just the homes may be handed over to a new landlord, but garages, playgrounds, shops on estates and land as well.

The housing association for Glasgow removed two tenant representatives from its board, who'd dared to question the evictions being made.

100 areas have already decided AGAINST stock transfer and even in Sedgefield, Tony Blair's constituency, they voted 'NO'!

Vote 'NO' to keep council housing and get it the money it needs and deserves."

ALL THE DOSH WE NEED...

"In the last 20 years receipts from Right-to-Buy sales of council housing have yielded around £45 BILLION, but only a quarter has been recycled into improving public housing". (Lord Best, director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation)



RUBBISH MANAGEMENT

The Housing Corporation has had to intervene because of poor performance or management irregularities in more than 1 in 5 transfers to housing associations.



NO POWER FOR TENANTS WITH COMMUNITY GATEWAY...

Research by Oxford Brookes University concluded that tenants on housing association boards are "marginalised" and "powerless" and that boards are manipulated and controlled by senior managers. Even the government's own Audit Commission says councils oversell tenants' powers on these boards.

Terry Hennegan, who resigned from Community Mutual in Swansea, said "I couldn't get satisfactory answers to my questions about land and assets that would transfer with the homes. If a tenant on the board can't get questions answered, how can Community Mutual give power to tenant communities?"



MORE EVICTIONS...

A National Housing Federation survey of 116 housing associations revealed that evictions were up by 36% and 16.5% were under the controversial Ground 8 rule, which can't be applied to council tenants (because we have secure, not assured tenancies). Possession orders are mostly sought because of rent arrears - often the result of housing benefit delays.



TRUDY WEBER from **PRESTONVILLE**, here with her son Ruben, is one of many council tenants at isolated addresses. The council's refusal to hand over these addresses has denied tenants the right to hear all sides of the argument.

SMALL AND LOCAL? FORGET IT!

In the last few years at least 20% of stock transfer housing associations started as subsidiaries to bigger ones, or have merged since transfer, or are considering it.

Remember, a merged HA is under no legal obligation to keep promises made at the time of transfer.



BUY ONE GET ONE FREE, ANY(pea)BODY?...

The housing association Peabody Trust plan to sell off 1,100 of their homes. Their chief executive helpfully admitted, "Peabody is just like Sainsbury's". GuinnessTrust and other HAs have similar plans, which are expected to amount to a loss of 7,255 homes this year. The housing associations say sales are necessary to fund decent standards for the rest of their housing stock. How ironic for us in Brighton and Hove, who are told that we can't have these standards, unless we agree to HA takeover! (Inside Housing, April '06)



EIREEN GRIFFIN from central Brighton and a former chair of **HAMPSHIRE COURT** and **WILTSHIRE HOUSE TRA** says, "Half my life, I and my family, have benefited from the security of council housing and I'm not willing to give that up for lies and blackmail. Our homes have been paid for many times over. The money is there for improvements, it just needs to be spent wisely."

THAT'LL BE £4 MILLION FOR STARTERS, PLEASE, THANK-YOU, MADAM AND SIR ...

Setting up a stock transfer doesn't come cheap. With a 'Yes' vote, by this time next year the council will have blown £1.5 million and the housing association £2.5 million on top of that. You can draw your own conclusion who'll be coughing up that £4 million.

Stop the waste now by voting 'NO'.



MARY FUNNELL from **NORTH MOULSECOOMB** says, "If you don't know, Vote 'NO' and play for time. If everyone votes 'NO' the government's got to come up with a solution - they've promised decent standards for all, stock transfer or no stock transfer."

NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT...

Whilst chief executives of housing associations congratulate themselves in curbing their pay rises to 4% this year instead of 6 or 7%, the highest paid of them, David Cowens (Places for People HA) rakes in a tidy £300,000 plus salary. Poor John Belcher (Anchor Trust) is in second place on a paltry £211,000 pounds per annum! (Inside Housing, Sept '05)



BUILD MORE COUNCIL HOUSING NOW! ...

"If local councils were able to put money into development, we would be able to build 30% cheaper than housing associations". (Gary Porter, Conservative leader of South Holland District Council in Lincolnshire)



FOR THE WHOLE "STOCK-TRANSFER-DISASTER-EXPERIENCE" VISIT NOT-SO-SUNNY SUNDERLAND...

They've got it all - from demolition and community devastation (they call it 'regeneration') and building for sale on the private market, to broken promises and lack of consultation with tenants, and 'jobs for the boys' (and girls). Surprise, surprise, the council's former housing director got the job of chief executive (doubling his salary to £140,000 a year) while his partner's a director on £90,000. His nephew's on £90,000 too, and other family members have even managed to get in on the act. They've a nice new headquarters called Emperor House, while more people than ever are homeless. The council housing was taken over by the housing association in 2001. Last year, it had built 93 houses to rent, but demolished, emptied or sold off 6,200. Sunderland's housing waiting list currently stands at 19,000!



FRED ROBERTS from **WOODINGDEAN** says, "If this goes through we know what'll happen to rents, once the honeymoon 'guarantee' is over."

WE DON'T WANT IT...

A campaign by the National Housing Federation in 2003 highlighted some unsurprising facts: a decreasing number of people actively want to live in housing association homes (even amongst those who already live in them) and housing association tenant satisfaction has been gradually falling over several years.



HERE TODAY, DON TOMORROW...

Don Turner, chair of the council's Housing Committee, has made a "personal pledge" to keep to the promises of the stock transfer Offer Document to tenants. But as one canny tenant pointed out, "He can say what he likes, he'll be gone by next year!" (Turner isn't even standing again for the council in next May's elections.)



DEAR BRIGHTON & HOVE COUNCIL,...

Did you know you can save at least £1,300 if you do up my council house without stock transfer? Two government reports have shown that, but I can only assume you haven't read them. You did promise you'd do up our houses by 2010. So please get a move on. It's cold in here and we're fed up with waiting. We've had five years of propaganda, despite telling you ages ago we don't want a housing association. We just want the improvements the government's promised to council housing.

Please don't waste even more money sending someone round to speak to me, or I'll have to send them away with a flea in their ear! I'm voting 'NO' by the way.

Yours sincerely,

An angry, fed-up, Brighton and Hove council tenant.



JOHN OVENDEN from **COLDEAN** says, "The council's not perfect, but better the devil you know, especially the devils you can vote out of office!"

A SLIPPERY SLOPE...

In 2003 the Housing Corporation decided to allow housing associations to pay their board members up to £20,000 per annum each.

The secret is already out that board members of the proposed 'Brighton and Hove City Housing' will be able to claim 'expenses'. How much? Up to £20,000 pounds each a year, as it happens!



KUSH KHUNDAKAR who is on the committee for **Clarendon and Ellen RA, HOVE**, says, "Tenants don't want this privatisation. They want properly funded, publicly owned council housing."