

FROM AUSTIN MITCHELL MP



To: Local Authority Chief Executives & Executive Members for Housing,
Tenants organisations & Trade Unions,
Housing professionals, Policy organisations and Academics

1 January 2009

Dear Colleague,

Invitation to contribute to Council Housing Group inquiry

The Council Housing group at Parliament is holding a new inquiry on 25 February at Westminster. Our objective is to collect evidence supporting increasing allowances to 'level of need' for the management, maintenance and repair of council homes.

We intend to present our findings to Housing Minister Margaret Beckett, feed them into the national Review of Council Housing Finance and publicise the evidence to inform the public debate.

The group is inviting local authorities, tenants organisations, trade unions, housing professionals and academics to submit written evidence and/or come to Parliament on 25 February to give oral evidence and show support for our objectives.

We want to establish how much each authority needs to manage, maintain, repair and improve council homes and estates on a sustainable basis and the funding required to start building a new generation of first class council homes.

We hope that you/your organisation will agree to participate by completing our questionnaire and providing additional evidence and financial information.

Please also organise a broad delegation of tenants, trade unionists, elected Members, council officers and others from your area to come to Parliament on 25 February. Contact my office for further information and if you want to give evidence.

Members of our group have put down a new Early Day Motion (EDM 355) 'Council House Building'. We hope that you will encourage your local MP(s) to add their names in support and meet you at the inquiry on 25 February.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Austin Mitchell".

Austin Mitchell MP
chair. House of Commons Council Housing Group

HOUSE OF COMMONS COUNCIL HOUSING GROUP

New inquiry to collect evidence in support of increasing allowances to 'level of need' for the management, maintenance and repair of council housing and to support a new council house building programme.



INQUIRY SESSION AT PARLIAMENT 25 FEBRUARY

Questionnaire

Please complete as fully as possible and provide any supporting documentation you think would be relevant to our investigation

Name

Organisation Position

Address

Email Tel No

Name of Local Authority

Number of: Tenants Leaseholders Is your housing: Directly managed Managed by an ALMO

How much does your authority currently spend from your Housing Revenue Account on

Management	£m	Per home
Maintenance	£m	Per home
Major Repairs	£m	Per home

How much does your authority receive in allowances into your Housing Revenue Account for

Management	£m	Per home
Maintenance	£m	Per home
Major Repairs	£m	Per home

If possible, please provide a breakdown summary identifying main areas of spend on Management (estate management, care-taking, central services, etc) and Maintenance (reactive daytime repairs, out of hours services, planned maintenance, etc).

How much does your authority require if allowances were funded at 'level of need'? (Please provide supporting evidence)

Management	£m	Per home
Maintenance	£m	Per home
Major Repairs	£m	Per home

Support for historic debt £m

ALMO borrowing £m Per home

Guideline rent £m Per home

Actual Rent £m Per home

Has your authority 'unpooled' service charges from rent? **Yes / No** Please provide details...

Does your authority take into account any factors (apart from number of rooms) when setting rent levels in different areas/ estates **Yes / No**

Does your authority charge individual tenants for 'improvements' (new central heating, entry door systems) or modernisation

Do tenants who decline a new kitchen/bathroom (for whatever reason) get a discount on their rent? **Yes / No**

Is your authority able to meet the 'Decent Homes' standard? **Yes / No** Expected completion date

Do HRA projections enable the authority to sustain improvements over the next 30 years **Yes / No** If "No" what is the shortfall?

Has your authority improved homes/estates beyond Decent Homes **Yes / No**. Please specify and explain how this was resourced