

Camden tenants demand A FAIR & BALANCED DEBATE ON ALMOs with equal resources for both sides of the argument



The undersigned, tenants reps and individual tenants, are alarmed that Camden Council is misrepresenting the debate around Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and manipulating the process to try and fix the outcome.

● Many of us believe that ALMOs have striking similarities with Foundation Hospitals and other quangos which undermine our public services and are part of the government's wider privatisation agenda. This risk needs proper debate.

● Calls for more direct investment in council housing are growing. 115 MPs have signed a Commons motion and tenants, trade unionists, councillors and MPs from more than 60 areas took part in the 1800 strong rally and lobby of Parliament in January. The campaign has already won changes in government policy. Much more can still be won.

● Camden council is not conducting a 'fair and balanced debate'. Housing News has continually pushed a pro-ALMO line. The latest Special Housing News presented a one-sided position and misrepresented the financial alternatives.

● The option of using substantial existing resources and continuing to campaign to win further concessions from the government to allow direct investment without strings is dishonestly described as 'Stay as you are'. We need to win more money to carry out all the improvements we need but it is not true that Camden's housing is in crisis. The most urgent major works as part of a significant capital programme is not in doubt.

● Even Camden's own Business Plan recognises existing resources will support a major capital programme. It says that 60% of tenants homes will meet the government's decent homes target in full and the remaining homes will meet most (75%) of the target by 2010 using existing resources - without an ALMO.

● The repairs and improvements that Camden tenants want are not the same as the government's 'decent homes' definition. For tenants the benefits of investment

and the long term risks for the future of council housing are the key issues - not getting awards for meeting government targets.

● Camden's executive has ignored the democratic decision of the Joint District Management Committee (elected tenant reps from across Camden) on April 28th 2003 to 'not support the formal bid for ALMO'. They now plan to pre-empt a tenants' ballot by going ahead with selecting a Shadow Board and restructuring the housing department to align it with an ALMO.

● The ALMO reference group set up by the Council to ensure an all sided debate on the ALMO issue, has in effect been used by the Council to rubber stamp the government's timetable, creating a public impression that tenants have been involved in putting together a formal bid to the government. This is not the case which is why the Joint DMC voted against supporting the bid.

● The council is deliberately bypassing our TAs and the DMCs which are the recognised channel for consultation on policy issues affecting Camden tenants and residents.

● We are committed to ensuring that there is a fair and equal debate for both sides of the argument before the vote in December. We expect all forums and committees that are constituted to act on behalf of council tenants to uphold these democratic decisions.

● We endorse the Joint DMCs' decisions including the demand that the council fund a 'case against ALMOs broadsheet' to re-balance the debate after their one-sided pro ALMO Special Housing News. We also support the resolutions to demand that the Council fund an independent expert to work with us to investigate the financial options and alternatives available.

● We support the campaign to win direct investment in Council housing - with no strings attached. We will organise tenants meetings and distribute material to publicise this campaign and make sure the case against ALMOs is properly put to guarantee a genuinely balanced debate.

ADD YOUR NAME TO THE STATEMENT - PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

<i>Name</i>	<i>TRA & Position</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Tel No/Email</i>

(use reverse side for more signatures)

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