

HAGGERSTON EDITION WINTER 2004/5

What's Wrong with the ALMO?

It is now clear that the council wants nothing to do with running council housing. Estates have either been sold or handed over to private companies like Pinnacle and Parkman to run. Now the council wants to go one step further and pass the whole of council housing over to an "arms length management organisation" known as an ALMO.

The 'Fun Days', Decent Homes newsletters, show-flats and 'Test of Opinion' are all just a smokescreen. The council has just one aim – to set up their ALMO.

As Hackney Independent's Carl Taylor stated in the Hackney Gazette (November 25th) "Hackney Council has made up its mind to set up an ALMO. This 'Test of Opinion' is a cynical exercise to pretend democracy exists where it does not." They call it a 'Test of Opinion' and not a ballot because this allows them to ignore the result if it's not what they want.

Why do Labour want an ALMO?

Labour knows they can't persuade us to vote to go directly to a private landlord. With an ALMO they don't legally have to give us a vote. But by moving council housing away from the rest of the council they prepare the ground for a future sale. In the meantime councillors don't have the hassle of tenants coming to them for repairs any more. "It's not me guv, it's the ALMO who do your repairs!"

Why do top council officers want the ALMO?

ALMOs mean big pay rises for top housing officers. They become ALMO Executives with more power and are no longer accountable to elected councillors

Why does the Hackney Independent oppose the ALMO?

Because we are the exact opposite of our Labour councillors and council housing bosses. Unlike them, most of us live or were brought up on council estates. We want council housing to be run by the council in the interests of tenants and leaseholders.

Whereas New Labour councillors see council housing as a problem we know how important it is to our class. Older people remember the time before there was much council housing and how important it was to get rid of private landlords.

We know that the way Hackney Council runs our estates is far from perfect, but with council housing we have the chance to put democratic pressure on councillors to fulfil their responsibilities to manage and maintain our estates.

We say to New Labour councillors – council housing is not the problem – you are. If you don't want to run council housing resign and let someone else take over who wants to represent tenant and leaseholder interests.

The Council will try to impose their ALMO on us. We must not let them get away with it.

We want council housing to be run by the council in the interests of tenants and leaseholders



Clouds over Hackney council housing?

Think you're not affected by the ALMO?

We know that some readers of Hackney Independent will not be directly affected by the ALMO. Haggerston East and part of Bryant Court have already been sold, as have the older people's sheltered housing.

But it is important for you to know what the council is planning to do to your neighbours' homes.

Residents on Haggerston West and most of Kingsland estates were not even given the sham "test of opinion." The Council has already decided that it knows best for you. They want to sell your estates to a housing association and aren't even giving you the ALMO option.

Hackney **Independent** Farmer's Market Survey

A Market for Hackney's New Yuppies

The view from Whiston & Goldsmiths Estates

83%

say market not aimed at us

93%

say market is too expensive

79%

say market should be made to sell goods at affordable prices

Broadway Market has changed a lot in the last year. Suddenly there are new pubs, galleries, estate agents and boutiques, as well as expensive new flats springing up around it. Broadway Market now has a weekly Farmers Market selling organic food, jewellery and £3 loaves of bread.

To find out more about what people think of the Farmers Market Hackney Independent interviewed 50 shoppers at the market and 100 households on Whiston and Goldsmiths estates.

We found that most estate residents were glad to see some activity in the market but clearly recognise that it is not aimed at them. Many would like to see the market selling things they need like toiletries and kids' clothes at prices they can afford.

Meanwhile, those who are using the market have no idea that the area is becoming divided - between a working class majority who are having to put up with bad housing and run down services, and a new breed of rich, self-interested young professionals.

This is not just an accident of the property market. The gentrification of the area is something that is urged on by Hackney Council's regeneration plans. As they privatise public services, shut down community services, run down estates and close schools they are bringing in a new class of people with money to 'improve the area'. The middle-class Labour council sees these new-comers as 'their kind of people', while they look down on those who live on estates.

The view from Farmers' Market Shoppers

£1000+

average weekly wage

£31.50

average weekly spend at farmers market

9 months

average time they have lived in Hackney

Whiston & Goldsmiths residents say:

Farmers Market shoppers say:

"It's for the yuppies! We used to have loads of cheap stalls years ago"

"The property is cheap and I like that the area is changing"

"It doesn't have the products we need"

"There is a nice vibe about the market. It brings in nice people"

"I don't know anyone who's used it"

"It's a vibrant, great area"

"It does make a difference because we haven't had anything around here for a long time, but it's too expensive"

"The area is rough but the market is good"

"It's too overpriced for this area. It's for people in the posh flats. They're driving us out"

"It's up and coming and exciting"

"The shops in the market are fab"

