



**St Georges**  
COMMUNITY HOUSING

 **NEWS**  
in brief  
from St Georges Community Housing

## LOCAL HOUSING TENANTS LAUNCH CAMPAIGN ON 'DECENT HOMES' PROMISES

January 2010

**Basildon District Council and its ALMO St Georges Community Housing are taking action to secure the future of its Decent Homes funding, by supporting a national petition posted on the 10 Downing Street website calling for ministers to honour their financial pledges.**

The petition has been organised by the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA) the national body that represents England's 69 ALMOs and is calling for the Government to bring the 12,900 properties in Basildon up to the Government's Decent Homes standard. Some 13,000 local residents have been affected – which includes both Council tenants and leaseholders, as well as many more individuals and businesses in the wider community. St Georges Community Housing was created in 2007 to bring council housing up to a 'Decent' standard and give genuine decision making powers to tenants.

In July, Housing Minister, John Healey, announced that the Government would delay the Decent Homes funding for all ALMOs that had not yet achieved two-star status. Eleven other ALMOs who had not yet achieved the Audit Commission's Two Star rating were also affected, with the decision expected to hit up to 300,000 ALMO tenants nationwide.

Following a successful Two-star inspection in October this year, the Government agreed to release the first portion of funding, £5m, for phase one property improvements, and a further £10m for 2009/2010. However the government has yet to announce the timescale for the next phase of Decent Homes funding. Basildon requires a total of

£142million to ensure all its housing stock is brought up to the Decent Homes Standard.

Cllr Andrew Baggott, Cabinet member responsible for ALMO Clienting said: "*I fully support the tenants in their petition to government. Having done everything required to secure the decent homes funding it was shameful to then renege on the commitment. Basildon Council has lobbied for a commitment from the government and support the tenants in this initiative.*"

The Number 10 petition is calling for "the Prime Minister to ensure that all Arms Length Management Organisations who qualify immediately receive all the Decent Homes programme funding promised them."

The campaign is backed by the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA) whose 69 member organisations manage over one million council homes. The NFA is working closely with St George's management and residents, advising on how best to make their case to ministers, and has commissioned a research document exploring the benefits of Decent Homes.

This details how living in a Decent Home-standard property - warm, dry, weatherproof, in a reasonable state of repair and with reasonably modern facilities - does not merely

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boost health and wellbeing, but also improve tenants' lives via home security/crime reduction, community cohesion, educational attainment, lifelong achievement, jobs and apprenticeships

The report includes testimony from tenants about how the state of currently unimproved homes damages their lives; the financial costs and job losses at contractors whose order books have been hit; and the potential penalties for ALMOs who have had to cancel building contracts.

Although St Georges Community Housing is recognised as a leading provider of quality homes and tenant services, the decision to delay funding could have a serious effect on both tenants and contractors in Basildon – just as the building industry and employment have been hit hard by the recession.

Councillor Frank Tomlin, Cabinet Member for Housing at Basildon Council, reported huge disappointment among the many tenants who will now have to wait a long time to enjoy the improvements to their homes they were promised. He said: *“Although we are relieved to have received £5m Decent Homes funding this year and £10m for next, this falls a long way short of the £142 that the Government agrees is necessary to complete the job of providing much needed and already long overdue home improvements. This is why people feel so let down and why there is such great impetus for what will be a wide-ranging and unrelenting campaign.”*

Before the Decent Homes programme's introduction, 2.1m homes nationally did not reach a 'Decent' standard. Now as a result of Government funding, 82 per cent of these are 'Decent' - 250,000 of which are managed by ALMOs.

Funding has been diverted to support a new house building initiative. Cllr Tomlin

stressed that Basildon Council supports this programme, but financing it partly by reducing money allocated to our Decent Homes programme is not the right solution.

He said: *“ We recognise there is a desperate need in Basildon and across the country for new affordable social housing. Given there will shortly be five million people nationwide on council waiting lists it is essential that new affordable housing is built. However that will take years and in the meantime we must continue to maintain and improve existing stock. Our existing tenants deserve better than to live in sub-standard decaying properties with no immediate relief in sight.”*

**To sign the petition visit**

**<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/DecentHomes/>**

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