

Council housing's time has come

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) has welcomed the commitment for councils to be key providers of housing in the Government's consultation on reform of the housing finance system.

Commenting on housing minister John Healey's proposals for scrapping the unpopular Housing Revenue Account subsidy system, APSE's chief executive, Paul O'Brien, said: 'For too long council housing has been regarded as a poor relation compared with other housing options, when in reality it offers a vital solution to pressing accommodation and economic needs. Now political will and economic circumstance have conspired to enable its potential to be realised at long last. Council housing's time has come. The opportunity for greater local autonomy and ability to keep receipts on rental income and sales to enable new-build to take place are particularly welcome.'

Mr O'Brien added that the distribution of debt will however be a 'sticking point' in the transition to a new, fairer regime. 'We need to make sure there are not winners and losers but that a consensus is reached that is acceptable for all authorities. It must be remembered that some of the historic debt in question dates back to homes built to replace those bombed during World War Two. It is not simply a case of some councils having managed their resources better than others.'

Mr O'Brien concluded that APSE, which has campaigned for the past decade for a fairer finance system and councils to fulfil their house-building role, will work with its members and Government representatives to help develop acceptable arrangements as swiftly as possible.

'With the right financial framework, this could be the start of a whole new era of sustainable council housing,' he concluded.

Editor's note

Housing minister John Healey launched the Government's consultation on the future of housing finance on 21st July.

Details can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/councilhousingconsultation>

Contact details

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) has some 260 members from councils providing front-line services across the UK, including housing.

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