

"CRUMBLETOWN"

A role play exercise exploring issues in Housing Policy.

SCENARIO

The London Borough of Crumbletown is an inner city area with a ethnically mixed population of 200,000. 50% of the housing is owned by the Council, 35% is old owner occupied terraces, 10% is private rented decrepit Victorian villas broken up into bedsits and 5% is new or refurbished housing association stock. There are 2,500 households on the housing waiting list, and 500 of these are homeless families. The Council is paying an average of £100 a week per person to keep these people in bed and breakfast in seedy hotels in a neighbouring borough.

There is a particular shortage of large family houses resulting in overcrowding, and an increasing need for sheltered single person units on the ground floor because of the growing proportion of elderly people. There are 85 high rise blocks in the borough. Six of these (600 homes) have been declared unsafe and evacuated, while another 30 need major repairs costing £30 million.

At least 30% of the owner occupied stock needs major improvements at an average cost of £4000, but there is only £2 million available for improvement grants. There is almost no land available for new building, and the Director of Finance has declared that only £10 million (enough for 200 new houses) is available for new buildings, unless money is transferred from the education and social services budgets.

The Council is under pressure from Whitehall to hold down spending and knows that it will lose money by ratecapping if it overspends. It is election year and with the opposition pressing hard, to increase rates or cut services could be disastrous. Meanwhile the Mandela Estate Tenants association has organised a rent strike. They are demanding that the problem of damp in their maisonettes is put right immediately, and that all families with children living more than three floors up are rehoused. Finally Wimratts the builders have made an offer to buy the whole of the nearby McDonalds Estate with the plan of redeveloping. They would like to refurbish 200 of the best homes for private lettings to tenants, and to demolish the remaining 500 homes; replacing them with 100 luxury town houses, and 250 starter homes for sale to young professionals.

The Housing Committee has called an open community meeting with representatives of Wimratts, the Local tenants, and the Wilberforce Housing Association to discuss the proposals. The vicar has been asked to take the chair.

PEOPLE: Roles

Rev. Simon Holdbalance, vicar of St Jude the Obscure.
Fred Haveterwaite; Chair of Housing
Gladys Causetrouble; Opposition Councillor
Frank Brentwood : Deputy Director of Housing
Rene Makearow : Secretary & Chair of Tenants Association
Sir Jerry Rushprofit; Director of Wimratts the builders.
Alison Helpemout; Senior Housing Officer, Wiberforce Housing Association.