



January 2018

2018 Alternative Housing Awards | Peabody Victory | Housing Summit | Open Meeting | Policy Discussion

Welcome to our January update!

A happy new year to all residents, workers and housing activists, and congratulations to everyone who helped highlight the growing housing crisis in 2018. There were some notable victories but it's clear that we will be kept busy in the months ahead, holding decision-makers to account and demanding better services and working conditions.

You are now invited to our next open meeting to help plan activities for the coming year:

- **Tuesday 29th January 2019**
- 6.30pm – 8pm
- Unite HQ
- 128 Theobalds Rd, London WC1X 8TN

SHAC NEWS

And the winners are ...



On the 5th December, the executives of housing associations and development companies attending a prestigious conference at Liverpool Street seemed startled to see their association names on a large banner outside, naming and shaming them for poor performance, poverty pay, and a host of other misdemeanours over the last year.

The winners of these unwelcome **SHAC** accolades each received hundreds of votes from housing association tenants and workers. They included Sanctuary Housing, London & Quadrant, Peabody Family Mosaic, Notting Hill Genesis, Optivo, Tower Hamlets Community Housing, Clarion Housing Group, Catalyst, and St Mungos. One surprising entry was the small

but controversial Tower Hamlets Community Housing. A full listing is available on our website [here](#). You can also see a short video of the event [here](#).

The bosses showed their displeasure as they walked past, telling attendees that there were "millions of satisfied customers". But while the bosses self-congratulate, the **Sanctuary** tenants have been forced to set up a Facebook page to record their heart-rending descriptions of problems the HA is refusing to address. One woman has been living with a leaking roof for the last four years, peeling the wallpaper and generating mould and damp in her bedroom. Another, with a five-month old baby was told by Sanctuary just to keep her windows open. Their Chief Executive earns £340k per year and is happy to cut the salaries of Sanctuary staff.

The millions of satisfied customers probably don't include **L&Q** tenants faced with an 18% service charge hike, or residents around the priceless Old Tidemill community garden being ripped up by Lewisham Council and **Peabody Trust**. Nor have these associations treated their staff any better. BAME staff at **St. Mungo's** are disproportionately subjected to Disciplinary procedures. Helen Giles, the executive Director of People and Governance has accepted that this is indeed the case but is unable to explain why. In fact the lack of BAME directors, and rarity in the leadership team point to institutionalised racism. The story is of course very different for the executives. Rod Cahill, outgoing Chief Executive of **Catalyst** for example believed there was no shame in offering hard-working staff a zero percent pay rise whilst spending £11,000 of company funds on a lavish invite-only retirement party at the exclusive OXO2 venue.

SHAC will be organising the 2019 Alternative Housing Awards in the Summer, so watch out for announcements.

Peabody Victory

In November, members of the Unite Housing Workers Branch were threatening to ballot for strike action at Peabody, and were delighted to be given support and encouragement by Peabody residents. The dispute began in June with the announcement of Peabody Direct's relocation from central London to Pitsea in Essex. During the campaign members were shocked by the apparent lack of understanding of their role by the Chief Executive Brenden Sarsfield who referred to the staff as merely "message takers".



When the Unite team at Peabody began to organise for the possibility of industrial action, one of their key steps was to meet with residents to explain the dispute. The meeting was facilitated by SHAC and ensured that residents understood the dispute and were also prepared to help publicise the campaign. Our thanks to all the Peabody residents who offered to help and we are delighted to report that the strike was averted when an improved offer was made. You can read more on the story [here](#).

Housing Summit



On the 8th December, SHAC participated in the Housing Summit organised by Axe the Act / Homes for All. This event built on the campaign to win safe, secure homes for all.

About 180 people attended the event, from localised tenant groups to trade union activists, and broader housing campaigns, all intent on developing stronger alliances in the coming year. SHAC representatives were on the panel of the Housing Association workshop and agreed to campaign for accountability to residents, the democratisation of associations for tenants and workers, and direct government funding for new and existing homes among other themes.

Policy Discussion



We now have a new section on our website containing policy proposals developed by members. The first three cover the 'Top Ten' demands on the Labour Party, plans to reform housing associations, and actions that councils can take to alleviate the housing crisis. All are available [here](#) and will be discussed at the open meeting on the 29th January.

We welcome your ideas on these proposals, so if you have policy ideas that you think should be included, please feel free to comment directly on the website, or send papers to shac.action@gmail.com.