



# Co-operative and Mutual Housing Commission Launched

By **Adrian Coles**

Chair of the Commission on Co-operative & Mutual Housing



**IT SEEMS THAT HARDLY A DAY GOES BY IN WHICH HOUSING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE WIDER ECONOMY AND SOCIETY ISN'T IN THE NEWS. YET A POTENTIAL SOLUTION TO MEETING THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY NEEDS OF MANY BRITONS - HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES - HAS RECEIVED INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION BY POLICY-MAKERS IN RECENT YEARS.**

That's why the Chartered Institute of Housing, the National Housing Federation, the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust and the Building Societies Association, as well as co-operative organisations like the Confederation of Co-operation Housing, Co-operatives UK, the Co-operative Development Society, and the UK Co-housing Network, have established a 15 month Commission, of which I am Chair. The Commission will explore the future of these diverse and often misunderstood housing organisations. Also supported by social housing providers, Accord, Hanover, Matrix and Trident, the Commission is building upon the work of the 2001 Co-operative Commission, chaired by John Monks, which sought to evaluate the 'co-operative advantage'.

Institute and the University of Birmingham's Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, we hope to be able to make recommendations for the long-term strategic growth and management of UK housing co-operatives.

The Commission is taking evidence from across the country through public hearings, is calling for evidence from interested parties, is researching housing co-operative case studies, and liaising with major political parties, all of which have expressed interest in the Commission's work.

### **A mutual legacy**

Our research to date shows that housing co-operatives have a considerable legacy of achievement that goes back to the early 19th Century. Yet mutual solutions to meeting housing needs are often not well-known or understood in the UK today, although the mention of their potential contribution was pointed-up by the recent Government White Paper 'Communities in Control'. The co-operative housing movement is also contributing, alongside other resident organisations, to the creation of a 'National Tenants' Voice'.

The total number of housing co-operatives in the UK is estimated at 652, overseeing more than 35,000 homes. Of these, 580 are located in England managing around 31,000 homes. The annual turnover of UK housing co-

operatives is £125 million. This group is judged to include 46,000 members and employ 601 people.

Yet housing co-operatives constitute only 0.1 percent of the country's housing stock in comparison with 18 percent in Sweden and 14 percent in Norway for example. Further afield, Canada has more than 2,000 housing co-operatives housing 250,000 people and in Turkey 1.4 million co-operative housing units represent one quarter of the country's housing stock.

Only a handful of UK housing co-operatives can be assessed as relatively large with 10 having an annual turnover of more than £1 million. These 10 manage 29 percent of total co-operative housing in the UK.

Housing co-operatives are also a small, if flourishing element in a larger and growing UK co-operative sector. The £1.6 billion takeover of Somerfield by the Co-op Group is a recent example of expansion. UK co-operatives of all types have an annual turnover of £27.4 billion - greater than many countries - have 11 million members and employ more than 237,000 people.

**Adrian Coles is also Director-General of the Building Societies Association.**

WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LONG-TERM STRATEGIC GROWTH AND MANAGEMENT OF UK HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES

### **Gathering evidence**

From our assembly of evidence and from new research being undertaken by the Human City

**i** The Commission is both seeking views about mutual housing organisations and further sponsorship of the Commission's general work and for a series of high profile events. For information email [kevin.gulliver@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:kevin.gulliver@tiscali.co.uk) or visit the website here [www.ccmh.coop](http://www.ccmh.coop)