

Defend Council Housing

LABOUR CONFERENCE 2023

TIME TO INVEST NOW

Council housing is key to solving the housing crisis. Non-market council housing pays for itself, an investment in homes that provide security for generations of tenants and communities.

The Local Government Association, Chartered Institute for Housing, alongside Shelter and most of the key housing bodies now say this too.

The fight we now face is for the funding needed. A Labour government that sticks with the existing £2.4 billion a year grant funding cannot address the crisis of disrepair, waiting lists, homelessness and Temporary Accommodation levels that are perpetuating misery and bankrupting councils.

Councils in England spent at least £1.6 billion a year (2021-2) on Temporary Accommodation (TA). Rochdale Council alone spends £2 million a year on TA, for the thousands who need a council home.

Housing Benefit spending is reaching £30 billion a year, much of it going to private landlords, as with TA spending. Another £25 billion has been spent on Help to Buy, effectively a subsidy to developers.

A national programme to build 100,000 new and acquired council homes a year, requires £11 billion a year of investment.

And to maintain and improve existing council homes requires reopening the inadequate funding settlement for Councils in 2012.

Currently tenants are left to face two- and three-tier rents and escalating charges, dangerous construction and inadequate repairs and maintenance, leading to cold, damp, mouldy and flooded homes.

And too often we are fighting unnecessary demolition of homes. Housing Minister Michael Gove now seems set to incentivise more estate demolition particularly in London, by redirecting Affordable Housing Funding grant to 'regeneration'. This potentially drives further estate clearance freeing up valuable land for yet more unaffordable private housing development.

But despite 20 years of privatisation and sell offs, campaigning by tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs and supporters, has fought these and more attacks on the central

principles of decent, secure, really-affordable and accountable council housing.

Now we need to step up a broad, united campaign that galvanises the pressure, and the action, to win the £11 billion investment we need, for existing and new council homes. ■

RAAC – WHO PAYS?

We hope RAAC is not widespread in council homes – but can't take that for granted.

Government must finance inspections by qualified surveyors and building engineers, as part of a national risk register for all public buildings the TUC calls for.

It should also pay for remediation, demolition, rehousing or rebuilding where necessary.

Councils' building insurance policies may or may not cover the removal of RAAC.

All rents paid by council tenants went straight to Government up to 2013. Building regulation and >>>

CONFERENCE MEETING

Monday 9th October at 1pm

Venue: Labour Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT (First Floor Meeting Room)

PUT COUNCIL HOUSING AT THE HEART OF LABOUR'S SOLUTION TO THE HOUSING CRISIS

with ● **Matt Western MP** (Chair APPG Council Housing)
● Housing lead councillors from **Reading** and **Worthing**
● **Fraser McGuire** (Young Labour) ● **Paul Burnham** (DCH)
● Chair: **Ben Clay** (Greater Manchester Tenants Union and Labour Campaign for Council Housing)

Hosted by Labour Campaign for Council Housing and DCH

Vote for Housing Make sure council housing is debated at Labour conference. Vote 'Housing' in the priorities ballot.

Defend Council Housing

>>> inspection standards were set by national Government, which approved the construction of council homes.

The alternative is that funding comes from rents, depleting further each Council's already-underfunded Housing Revenue Account, worsening disrepair and new home-building. ■

MPs' INQUIRY: WHAT COUNCIL HOUSING NEEDS

MPs have launched an Inquiry into the present and future needs of council housing, focusing on five central questions.

As part of the Inquiry, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Council Housing is holding evidence-gathering sessions around the country. These are helping to revive and energise local tenant groups and campaigns.

See <https://mattwestern.org/news-article/appg-for-council-housing-inquiry/> for more details and how to organise a local evidence session. Submissions by email to matt.western@parliament.uk or by post to: Council Housing Inquiry, c/o DCH, PO Box 33519, London E2 9WW. ■



PETITION

We, the undersigned, support this five point plan calling for radical policy changes to address the housing crisis.



1 Government investment in a mass council housing building programme, including requisitioning of empty homes and abolition of 'right to buy'
2 Rent controls and secure tenancies in the private rental sector. Robust regulation of housing associations

3 New funding to repair and refurbish existing council housing – do not demolish
4 Adequate funding for fire safety, and for retrofitting and thermal insulation
5 Planning for the people and the planet, and not for developers' profits

DCH with the **Homes for All** campaign has drawn up a five-point housing charter. To sign and circulate see <http://www.axethehousingact.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Petitionwplanet.pdf>

GOVE ROBS £1.9 BILLION

Michael Gove's Department for Levelling Up is to hand back to the Treasury £1.9bn which was meant to tackle England's housing crisis (*Guardian*, 12th July).

£255m in housing development funding was handed back to the Treasury, alongside £245m which was meant for improving building safety after the Grenfell fire. The rest of the unused funds (£1.2bn) had been allocated to the Help to Buy scheme.

We demand that the full £1.9 billion is returned by the Treasury and used for housing those most in need, in the form of local authority housing at Social Rent.

● Eileen Short, Defend Council Housing ● Morag Gillie, Chair Homes 4 All UK ● Suz Muna, Secretary SHAC, Social Housing Action Campaign ● Shahin Akhtar, Secretary Walsall TUC ● John Barker, Carlisle Tenants Federation ● Jeremy Corbyn MP, Islington ● Jenny Kassman, Islington Homes for All and others ■

SELF FINANCING – REOPEN DEBT SETTLEMENT

The 'self-financing' settlement in 2012 has not provided "sustainable" financing for Council housing, as promised. Rent caps, though welcome for tenants, cut income. Increasing discounts pushed up Right to Buy sales, and cut further into rent income.

Rising building and repair costs

further erode the 30-year financial plans councils drew up in 2012.

And built into the original settlement was a debt time-bomb, forcing today's tenants to subsidise an £8bn claw-back by the Treasury for fictitious 'historic' debt.

This leaves Councils' Housing Revenue Accounts short of funds

to manage and maintain existing homes, and unable to finance borrowing for new homes.

The 2012 settlement provided for 're-opening' of the debt settlement, if necessary. Councils need to insist the settlement is reviewed, to negotiate a fair deal for tenants still paying twice over for existing council housing. ■