

Ten questions to candidates

Put these questions to politicians standing in forthcoming local government, Welsh and Scottish elections and candidates involved in internal party elections. Let DCH know how they respond...

- 1.** Decent, affordable, secure and accountable council housing is an important public service?
- 2.** Existing council homes and estates should be improved to at least meet the government's Decent Homes standard / Welsh Housing Quality Standard / Scottish Housing Quality Standard with local authorities receiving sufficient allowances to maintain that standard?
- 3.** New council housing – which is cheaper and quicker to build, manage and maintain than alternatives – should be built to meet the growing need of households on council waiting lists?
- 4.** There should be a level playing field for council housing – including equal treatment on debt write-off and 'gap funding' subsidies for councils who decide to retain their homes as is made available to those who privatise? (For candidates in Wales/Scotland only:) the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Executive provide 'gap funding' subsidy from their own resources to authorities which transfer. They should make this same subsidy available to councils who need it whether they transfer or not? And they should press the UK government to make debt write off available on an equal basis for all?
- 5.** All the money that belongs to council housing – every penny from tenants' rents and capital receipts from 'Right to Buy' and other housing sales – should be ringfenced to provide direct investment in council housing (known as the 'Fourth Option') to improve existing and build new council homes?
- 6.** The ODPM Select Committee was right that the government is being 'dogmatic' in forcing councils to change the ownership or management of their homes in order to access extra investment?
- 7.** Tenant directors are prevented by company law and confidentiality clauses from acting as effective 'representatives' and the process does not empower tenants as a whole. Councils should fund genuinely independent tenants' organisations to represent the interests of council tenants.
- 8.** Registered Social Landlords are increasingly driven to act as private businesses and are involved in a rapid process of mergers and takeovers. This makes them more remote, less responsive and less accountable to both their tenants and elected local authorities trying to carry out their strategic housing responsibilities?
- 9.** Any move to remove a life-long secure tenancy, force up council rents, deregulate housing and provide public subsidies to private developers and landlords should be opposed?
- 10.** Government and some local authorities are bullying and blackmailing tenants to accept a change to the ownership or management of council housing. Any genuine 'consultation' should involve a 'fair and balanced' debate so tenants hear all the arguments, with equal access to public resources for both sides, and a formal ballot on any change?



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