

Defend Council Housing



Tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs

FIGHT FOR HOMES NOW

Council housing is back at the top of Labour's policy, following the election of Jeremy Corbyn and the new shadow cabinet. But this can't wait till 2020: we need urgent action to resist the onslaught on tenants and council housing.

The Conservative Government are undermining the future of council housing, cutting benefits meaning more evictions and encouraging soaring market rents. Britain already pays the highest-ever proportion of our income for housing. Evictions are at record levels; 4.5 million are on waiting lists, and a whole generation is trapped in insecure and exorbitant private renting.

To defy Government attacks we need to strengthen and support the growing housing resistance. Fighting the Bedroom Tax and benefit cuts, sell offs and evictions, demolition and privatisation puts tenants and councils in the front line of this fight.

Councils need to campaign alongside tenants and trade unions, and organise together.

We need national policies, backed by campaigns and practical resistance. Tenants and trade unions, working with councillors and MPs can build and organise the widespread anger against the extension of Right to Buy, and means testing/market rents for working households. Labour councils need to repeat the commitment not to evict tenants in arrears due to the Bedroom Tax.

Council housing finance is being sabotaged, undermining the 'self-financing' deal and local Housing Revenue Accounts by forced sell-offs and unfunded rent cuts. Labour needs to actively oppose and challenge these measures, and agree policy to invest in existing and new council housing. Writing off the Treasury's artificially-inflated historic debt, would free up council housing investment.

Council housing represents a real alternative to the failures of the private housing market. As housing associations increasingly behave like other private developers and landlords, we need to defend and invest in council homes, to provide a new generation of decent, secure and really-affordable housing with an accountable landlord.

Mass campaigns, marches and occupations, linking tenants and trade unions is how we won and defended council housing. Members, MPs and councillors need to link with tenants, housing campaigns and trade unions, in the fight for homes and rights.

STOP RIGHT TO BUY 2

We can stop Government plans to extend 'right to buy' for housing associations (RTB2). This would force Councils to sell off homes on the open market, to finance housing associations. It means loss of homes, more homelessness and a blight on council and housing association home building.

Jeremy Corbyn, Caroline Lucas and SNP MPs, trade unions and scores of councillors have signed the DCH statement, and committed to exposing

and resisting RTB2.

Sign the statement, and get your council, trade union, tenants and political party groups to discuss and support the campaign.

● See Defend Council Housing website: www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk/dch/resources/RTB2signup.pdf

● And pass the motion against Means Tests and income caps www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk/dch/resources/NoMeansTestingmodel%20motion.pdf

DCH LABOUR CONFERENCE MEETING
Tuesday 29th 6pm
with

- Shadow Housing Team member
- Betsy Dilner, Generation Rent
- GMB Young London
- Paula Peters, Disabled People Against Cuts
- Eileen Short, DCH

**at Friends Meeting House,
Ship St, Brighton BN1 1AF**

HRA funding sabotage

At a time when the housing market is failing to provide homes people can afford, the Government want to use existing council housing as a 'cash cow', and undermine the future of council and housing association housing for rent.

This is sabotaging the 2011 'self-financing' financial settlement with councils. Self-financing broke up the national Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and transferred huge debt and long-term risks to councils and tenants. The settlement built in underfunding. Most councils nonetheless wanted the benefits of a 30 year business plan based on long term funding assumptions.

But changes to rents and Right to Buy, and RtB2 plans forcing councils to sell the most valuable 30% of homes on the open market, will sabotage council housing finances, while permanently losing much needed family homes and rental income.

Reopen the debt settlement

When the coalition government introduced 'self-financing' it retained the power to reopen the 'debt settlement', "if a change is made that would have a substantial, material impact on the value of the landlord's business". The loss of 12% of expected income through rent changes alone, is such a material impact.

David Hall, a consultant involved in the creation of 'self-financing', has said councils would have paid £10 billion less in the debt settlement if subsequent changes to the rent formula had been included in the calculations. There are clear grounds for, at the very least, revisiting the 'debt settlement'.

The easiest way to deal with the problem would be to write off some of the

'debt'. This would cut the amount of debt and interest payments each Council pays. There is a strong case for write off all this bogus 'debt'. However, compensating each Council's HRA for the loss of rental income (the difference between the original estimates and the loss of rent resulting from government policy) is an absolute minimum, without which repairs and maintenance cuts will guarantee a deterioration in the quality of council housing.

These are peoples' homes. Failure to fund the HRAs adequately will adversely affect the quality of life of existing and future tenants. The coalition government is starving Council housing of the funds which it said in 2012 would "give Councils the resources they need to manage their own housing stock for the longer term..."

Stop demolishing council homes

Estates across the country are threatened by plans for large-scale redevelopment and demolition. Thousands of tenants in homes that are structurally sound, are resisting plans to break up their communities.

The Greater London Assembly Housing Committee calls for a tenant ballot on any such redevelopment plans. And Sadiq Khan MP, Labour's London Mayoral candidate says London must 'stop demolition of council homes'.

Government now designate council estates and other council land as

TENANTS' MANIFESTO 2015

The market isn't working. Millions of tenants are being ripped off in poor housing. Homeless numbers are rising fast. Council, housing association and private tenants and all those who need a home demand action.

- 1 Build council housing**
Direct investment without strings in existing and new council housing - including action to free Councils of historic debt to build new council housing.
- 2 Rights for private renters**
Regulation of Private Rented Sector to include repair standards and controlled rents; secure tenancies to end instability and no-fault evictions; and a fair process to bring agents, including discrimination against tenants on housing benefits, fees and charges to tenants and urgent withholding of deposit.
- 3 Powers over landlords**
Councils to have necessary powers and resources to regulate the Private Rented Sector, including powers to secure housing fit for use to meet standards, to improve and let this to council housing.
- 4 Stop benefit cuts**
End the Bedroom Tax and welfare cap; new welfare cap; new welfare cap; new welfare cap.
- 5 Energy efficient**
A funded programme to bring all existing and new council and other rented housing up to highest energy efficiency standards.
- 6 Secure and affordable**
Breakdown of unaffordable, up to 80% market Rent and 'bedroom' need from tenants to stabilize normal council housing association rents and tenancies.
- 7 Right to buy**
Revoke every home sold through Right to Buy for sale, with council tenancy and rent levels, ring fence all proceeds from Right to Buy for investment, and devolve and give Councils power to support Right to Buy if local housing needs dictate this.
- 8 Empty homes**
Powers to enforce the occupation of empty properties needed to meet housing need; strict controls on letting existing and vacant properties.
- 9 New build**
All new housing development to include at least 20% really-affordable housing for rent.
- 10 Public land**
All public land used for housing to create 100% publicly-owned, really-affordable housing.

Contact us with your comments, or to add your support, email: info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

Support the ten-point Tenants' Manifesto.



THE PEOPLE'S HOUSING CONFERENCE

Saturday 10 October 11am

Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London

Contact communityLE@unitetheunion.org or secretary@southlondon.pa.org

Defend Council Housing

- PO Box 33519, London E2 9WW
- www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
- info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
- 07432 098440
- Twitter: DCH campaigns

'NO' TO MIPIM - 'YES' TO HOUSING JUSTICE

9am Wednesday 21st - Friday 23rd October, Olympia

Join the protest against private developers and speculators who want to carve-up and sell-off Britain. They are doing deals to redevelop hospital sites, estates and public land. We need to stop them - and their plans!