

Defend Council Housing



STOP BENEFIT CUTS AND EVICTIONS BUILD THE COUNCIL HOMES WE NEED

Government policies are turning a housing crisis into a disaster. With new build at a post-1920 low, and homeless numbers soaring, subsidies are stoking up buy to let and another financial bubble.

Ministers have gone to war on tenants, with divisive lies and abuse. Cuts to housing capital investment are combined with a major attack on tenancy rights, rents and benefits.

And despite talk of localism, Councils are saddled with inflated and unjustified historic housing debts, and even prudential borrowing for council housing investment is capped.

A handful of councils are still pushing privatisation of council homes, often driven by officers' ambitions. Tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs need to organise together to win No votes in Salford, Lewisham, Durham and Lambeth.

Secure tenancies, really-affordable rents, decent standards and an accountable landlord are more important now than ever.

Investment in a major programme of improved and new council housing is the alternative to the Bedroom Tax and benefit cuts, as a way to create the homes we need and bring down rents.

We need a new generation of first class, energy efficient council homes with secure tenancies and low rents. Tenants, trade unions, Councillors and Labour conference should reject use of fixed term ('flexible') tenancies and up to 80% ('Affordable') rents as an alternative.

Labour needs to stand with the Anti Bedroom Tax and benefit campaigns that are revitalising the tenants movement across the UK. A commitment to abolish the Bedroom Tax and other benefit cuts, and invest in council housing, are the alternative to evictions, homelessness and soaring rents.

A commitment to use the next round of Quantitative Easing or other direct capital investment, to write off historic housing debt if Councils agree to targets for council house building, would be popular, simple and effective.

Right to Buy

Pouring public money into higher discount subsidies for Right to Buy council homes, exposes the Government's hypocrisy on the Bedroom Tax and benefit cuts. Tenants >>>

LABOUR CONFERENCE 2013 MEETING

CUT RENTS NOT BENEFITS – BUILD THE HOMES WE NEED

Tuesday 24th September 6pm

Brighthelm Centre, North Street, Brighton BN1 1YD

with ● Paul Kenny, GMB General Secretary ● Gail Cartmail, Unite Assistant General Secretary ● Heather Wakefield, Unison Local Government ● UCATT ● MPs ● Councillor Liz Wakefield, Brighton ● Anti Bedroom Tax Federation speaker ● Eileen Short, DCH

TUC congress supports:

- Abolition of Bedroom Tax and benefit caps
- Direct action against evictions due to benefit cuts
- A national demonstration against attacks on benefits
- A mass programme of council and other house building

“Instead of subsidising slum landlords let’s build the council housing we need. Instead of a Bedroom Tax let’s have a Mansion Tax.”

**Frances O’Grady,
TUC General
Secretary**



Picture: Jess Hurd

>>> who can scrape together enough to buy their home, can have as many rooms as they like, with generous subsidies.

Despite promises, these homes are not being replaced like for like. Government continue to take a cut from any receipts, and new homes, which can be elsewhere, are likely to have fixed term tenancies and up to 80% market rents, which makes them unaffordable in many areas.

Every penny belonging to council housing must be ring fenced, and council homes must be retained if they can not be replaced like for like. This robbery must be stopped.

Self financing – write off debt

The decentralisation of council housing finance was supposed to hand back control to Councils. But there are big strings attached. The millstone of historic debt – which tenants should no longer be paying – sucks out money which should be used to manage and maintain homes and estates in the long term.

Self financing is an incentive to push rent rises well above

inflation. And Government retains a tight cap on borrowing for capital investment, stopping Councils investing.

Rent pressure and borrowing are in part dictated by the vastly-inflated level of ‘historic housing debt’ forced on, as part of the self-financing settlement.

Historic debt – the cost of borrowing to build council housing, and for new ALMO investment from 2000 – has been manipulated by Governments. Stock transfer and right to buy receipts should have reduced the total debt from 1979. And the figure did fall steadily from £20 billion (1996-

7) to £12.7 billion (2004-5). But it rose to £19 billion by 2010, and to over £25 billion in the final settlement with Councils.

Tenants do not have direct ownership of their homes, which are a public asset; Government does not try to recover the cost of subsidy to mortgages, or stock transfer landlords, and receipts have paid the ‘historic debt’ many times over.

The debt of over £25 billion distributed to Councils in the self-financing settlement should be written off, in return for a commitment to fund a new mass programme of local council housing investment.

No to Bedroom Tax

Tenants and councillors across Britain are part of a big tide of opposition to the Bedroom Tax and other benefit cuts. 25,000 protested on 30 March, and new groups are organising around Britain as arrears and determination rises.

The UN special mission call for suspension of the Tax, legal challenges and wide trade union support for the tenants’ campaign, is strengthening the determination to resist, to show the Bedroom Tax is

unworkable locally, and to stop any evictions.

A long and growing list of Council and other landlords are agreeing not to evict tenants in arrears due to the Bedroom Tax and other benefit cuts. Some are re-designating bedrooms to help tenants avoid the Bed Tax. Councillors against the Bedroom Tax have launched an open statement:

www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk/dch/resources/CouncillorsvBedTax2.pdf

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