

# Defend Council Housing

@ Labour Party Conference

**Sunday 9-10pm**

**Midland Hotel** (inside cordon)

**Austin Mitchell MP**

**Michael Meacher MP**

**Jack Dromey**

UNITE deputy general secretary

**Heather Wakefield**

UNISON national secretary

**Wilf Flynn**, UCATT executive council

**Alan Walter**

chair Defend Council Housing

**Dear Gordon, we hope you're listening?**

## INVEST IN FIRST CLASS COUNCIL HOUSING

- **Stop privatisation**
- **Improve existing**
- **Start building new**

Tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs say:

**'FOURTH  
OPTION'  
for  
COUNCIL  
HOUSING**

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# Defend Council Housing

## 2008 Labour Conference Briefing

### Bottom line for council housing...

**1** Provide gap funding to enable all authorities to respect tenants' choice and meet the 'Decent Homes' standard

**2** Stop the robbery from tenants rents NOW – and increase allowances in the draft determination for 2009/10

**3** Immediate moratorium on expensive 'stock options appraisals' and privatisation ballots until the review reports

**4** Increase funding to enable local authorities to build a new generation of first class council homes

● The housing crisis gets bigger and deeper and the private housing sector is failing miserably. So-called Registered Social Landlords are increasingly unaccountable multi million businesses operating on a regional or national basis.

● The government's strategy for achieving 3 million new homes is unachievable because it relies on private sector solutions.

● The case for massive direct investment in first class council housing is stronger than ever.

● The language of 'social' and 'affordable' housing deliberately seeks to fudge real differences between tenures.

● 'Council housing' is uniquely defined by having 'secure' tenancies, lower rents and charges and management by a democratically elected and accountable landlord.

● The new commitment to allow councils to access Social Housing Grant to build new council homes is a symbolic

gesture but bringing forward funding for just 5,500 homes over two years (shared between councils and RSLs) fails to address the scale of demand for new council housing – and must be increased.

● Local Housing Companies involve selling council land to public/private partnerships to build mainly private housing. At best 25% will be for rent with RSL 'assured' not council 'secure' tenancies.

● There has been a low take-up of shared ownership schemes – despite massive public subsidy. Many don't want the risk of ownership and part buy/part rent is particularly uneconomic.

● Concentrations of deprivation have largely been caused by narrowing of allocation policies. Increasing supply and making council housing a tenure of choice again is the obvious solution.

● Government's commitment that its Review of Council Housing Finance will "ensure that we have a sustainable, long term system for financing council hous-

“ The report to conference falls a long way short of what is required. Without a real commitment to council housing our housing policy fails.”

**Austin Mitchell MP**

ing" and "consider evidence about the need to spend on management, maintenance and repairs" is welcome but implementation of changes in the next CSR is too late. Many councils are looking again at privatisation unless a clear signal is given that resources will be increased.

● Government must agree now to increase allowances (M&M and MRA) in the forthcoming subsidy determination; provide a 'level playing field' of gap funding to enable all authorities to meet the 'Decent Homes' standard and an immediate moratorium on 'stock options appraisals' and transfer ballots.

● Proposals to break up the national Housing Revenue Account (HRA) undermine the council housing sector and pose real dangers of future privatisation. Some councils will bully their tenants and others could face a serious financial crisis. Both would lead to homes being sold off.

● Government must provide a 'level playing field' on gap funding and debt write-off and reinvest all tenants' rents and housing capital receipts back into council housing to fully fund allowances for the management, maintenance, repair and improvement of council homes and estates, within a national HRA. This is a far safer solution for tenants and for councils.

### Extract from Composite 10 passed at Labour Party Conference, 2006

“ Conference reminds government of the clear 2005 manifesto commitment 'By 2010 we will ensure that all social tenants benefit from a decent, warm home with modern facilities'.

A Labour government cannot leave council tenants who have rejected privatisation without improvements...

Conference re-affirms the decisions of the 2004 and 2005 party conferences and our commitment to a 'Level playing field'. This should include ring-fencing all the income from tenants rents, capital receipts as well as equal treatment on debt write off and gap funding available to councils who transfer their homes to give tenants real choice and provide a long term future for council housing.

Conference again calls on government to provide the 'fourth option' of direct investment to council housing as a matter of urgency.

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