

Homes For People not For Profit: a Contribution to Labour's Review of Social Housing

1. This CLP notes that, because of government housing policies:

- None of the present government housing investment programme is spent on council or housing association 'social rented' housing, with a small proportion going to so-called 'Affordable Housing' (defined as 80% of market rent or up to £250,000 to buy), and 79% (£32 billion) used to subsidise developers and lenders;
- Housing associations in Cornwall are no longer building new homes for social rent, and a high proportion of their new tenancies are for only five to seven years rather than for life;
- Cornwall Council has outsourced the management of its homes to an Arms-Length Management Organisation, Cornwall Housing Ltd, and is increasingly involving the private sector to deliver new housing rather than building council homes with secure tenancies;
- There is a housing crisis with skyrocketing rents, exploitative landlordism and poor quality housing, characterised in Cornwall by high numbers of second homes and holiday lets.

2. This CLP welcomes the following proposals in the consultation paper *Housing for the Many* April 2018:

- we welcome the suspension of the right-to-buy (4.2) and call for it to be ended eventually;
- we welcome support for Community Land Trusts (4.5);
- we welcome the lifting of borrowing restrictions on local authorities building council houses (4.3);
- we welcome the proposals for bringing empty homes back into use (4.6).

3. This CLP believes:

a. That the affordability of housing should take into account actual household needs, using a definition such as the Minimum Income Standard from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, rather than any connection to the market.

b. That where public money and public land are used for housing, that it should be on the basis of publicly accountable organisations; in particular, that social rented housing should be provided through councils and housing associations on the basis of secure tenancies and controlled rents, which should include:

- repealing the attacks on the rights of council and housing association tenants from this Conservative government – including the bedroom tax, means-testing of rents and fixed-term tenancies;
- giving housing association tenants equal rights with council tenants, including secure rather than assured tenancies, and making housing associations more democratically accountable.

c. That there should be investment in the long-term maintenance, management and major repair of both housing association and council homes, to bring homes up to decent standards and ensure a sustainable future for existing and new homes. This investment should be at a level based on the independent research from the Building Research Establishment, and include improved accessibility and environmental standards.

d. That in order to provide new rented homes, the overall level of current housing investment should be increased, but also redirected, stopping all forms of subsidy – whether direct or indirect – to new development for individual or corporate private ownership. Instead a programme of social rented

provision through councils and housing associations should be reinstated – which should include the writing off of historical debt and changes to borrowing rules for local authorities, and the reintroduction of capital grant, set at a level which ensures that new homes can be built to decent standards on the basis of genuinely affordable rents. Such a public housing programme can deliver both direct-labour organisations to create secure jobs and a skilled workforce; and local planning to meet local needs, with community facilities.

e. That local authorities should be given the power to place an additional levy on second homes and holiday lets; that planning controls should be introduced for the change of a primary residence to a holiday home; and that where a village or town is so dominated by second homes and holiday lets that the community is no longer sustainable, local authorities should be given the right and resources to purchase houses in these communities themselves, as they come onto the market, to rent as council housing to meet local need.

f. That local authorities, in areas which are dominated by homes kept empty for investment purposes, shall be given the power and resources to compulsorily purchase such homes to rent as council housing to meet local need.

4. This CLP resolves:

- To contribute to the current Review of Social Housing being carried out by the national Labour Party according to the principles outlined above;
- To put this motion to Cornwall Labour;
- To ask Cornwall Labour to set up a campaign sub-committee on housing, with representatives chosen by each CLP, to co-ordinate policy and campaigning in accordance with these principles.

South East Cornwall CLP - April 2018