

Declaring a housing emergency

Move this model resolution at your CLP and/or union branch



In the priorities ballot to determine what issues would be discussed at the Labour conference housing once again was voted top priority by the constituency parties. The housing composite motion was voted through overwhelmingly if not unanimously. For the second conference running the membership in the constituencies and affiliated organisations have expressed their aspiration for a large scale council house building programme and ending Right to Buy.

When delegates whose CLPs had sent in housing resolutions met on the Saturday evening to draw up the housing composite resolution, the draft composite they were presented with only reaffirmed a previous commitment for “one million 'affordable homes' over ten years”. This wasn't good enough. Through the efforts of our members and other delegates the key points of our resolution were incorporated, only with the difference that the £10 billion a year commitment for council housing which was in Labour's 2019 manifesto was replaced with the words “fully funded” (i.e. 150,000 social rent homes of which 100,000 would be council homes). There were also important points from other resolutions, enshrining the right to adequate housing in law, and calling for full funding for retro-fitting all existing council homes.

Whereas the 2019 resolution sought a commitment on policy to be implemented by a future Labour government, this year's resolution called on Labour “to demand that the government takes action now to end the housing crisis” by a series of measures listed (see box).

Formally speaking the composite resolution has to go to the Nationally Policy Forum for consideration for inclusion in the next Manifesto. However, the Labour Party does not need the permission of the NPF to challenge the Tory government. The crisis is so acute that we cannot passively wait for the next general election. Labour should be challenging the Tories and campaigning for action to address the crisis **now**. It should be a focus for the whole party to campaign around. The national party should be demanding that the government adequately funds existing and new build council housing. Without government grant at least on the scale of £10 billion a year for council housing there will be no return to large scale building.

Labour should be “[holding the government's feet to the fire](#)” on the housing emergency. We have written to Shadow Secretary of State Lucy Powell asking for a zoom meeting to discuss the implementation of the motion. We are awaiting a reply.

(continued overleaf)

Model resolution – Council Housing

“This CLP welcomes the housing composite resolution passed at the Labour Party conference which included the main demands of the **Labour Campaign for Council Housing**. It called on the Labour Party to “demand that the government takes action now to end the housing crisis by”

- Fully funding councils to deliver the building of 150,000 social rent homes each year, including 100,000 council homes
- Ending Right to Buy
- Reviewing council housing debt to address underfunding of housing revenue accounts
- Fund the retro-fitting of council housing to cut greenhouse gases, provide jobs and promote a shift from outsourcing to Direct Labour Organisations
- Ending Section 21 (no fault) evictions

It also said: “Conference also calls upon Labour to place these actions at the centre of its housing policies.”

The passing of the composite resolution needs to be a launching pad for campaigning activity. We therefore

- Call on the Party nationally to implement the composite resolution as a matter of urgency.
- Call on our Labour Group to propose that our council **declares a housing emergency** to campaign for those key demands. This may include lobbying local MPs, the Local Government Association and other organisations, working with tenant groups and trades unions.”

The CLP agrees to affiliate to the Labour Campaign for Council Housing.”

We, however, can straight away use the resolution as a springboard for our own campaigning activity. We have produced a **model resolution** (see below) which we are asking constituency parties to pass. With minor amendment it can be moved in trade union branches as well.

What does the resolution aim to do?

- It calls on Labour at the national level to implement the composite resolution as a matter of urgency.
- It gives CLPs the opportunity to express their support for the housing composite and **to agree to affiliate** to our campaign.
- It proposes that Labour council groups, be they in power or opposition, put a motion to their council **declaring a housing emergency** (an idea originating from our members in [Cornwall](#)). The council will therefore publicly call for large scale council house building, ending right to buy etc.
- If a motion is on the agenda of a council meeting then we can organise a lobby/demonstration in support of it. We can work with tenant groups and trades unions to this end.
- The passing of a resolution by the council can be used to put pressure on MPs and the Local Government Association. The LGA has called for the government to fund 100,000 social rent homes a year, though instead of campaigning, it relies on private discussions with ministers.

If your council is a Tory one then it can be used to put pressure on them. After all, their own leaders in the LGA have said that the housing crisis cannot be resolved without councils becoming large scale builders of council housing. But the LGA's private lobbying will not shift the government. A Yougov poll indicated that 61% of Tory MPs think that the government should fund more social housing? Words are cheap. Let them put their own government under pressure.

Speaking at our Labour Party fringe meeting, Shadow Housing Minister Mike Amesbury told us to “hold our feet to the fire” (the Labour Housing Team), meaning keep up the pressure. Let's do that with a sense of urgency that the housing crisis demands. If a young footballer can force a weak and shambolic government to retreat on school meals, why can't the labour movement force the government to retreat on funding of existing and new build council housing?

One final point. The composite resolution included 13 bullet points. You can obviously pick and mix from the other eight bullet points we haven't included in our model resolution, depending on your local circumstances. For instance, Cornish CLPs will include reference to second homes/holiday lets because that phenomenon makes their housing crisis particularly acute.

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The housing emergency in your town or city

Obviously the situation in each locality varies. In arguing for declaring a housing emergency it will help if you can paint a picture of the form it takes in your area. **Here are links to government statistics which will help you to do that.** Here's an [example](#) of how you can use some of the statistics to explain in concrete terms the situation in your locality.

Here you can find median and lower quartile house prices as compared to median and lower quartile earnings.

[House price to workplace-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Here are stats for statutory homelessness and numbers in temporary accommodation.

[Live tables on homelessness - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

This shows local authority housing statistics data returns sent in each year by councils to the Ministry. They have a wealth of data which will enable you to see what your council has been doing year on year for the last decade in relation to its council housing stock. There is also data for areas where the council housing stock has been sold off.

[Local authority housing data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

You can see private rental prices for mean, median and upper quartile rents for a room in shared accommodation, one bed, two bed, three bed and 4+ beds in your area (starting from Table 2.1).

[Private rental market summary statistics in England - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Addendum

The practical content of the Composite motion passed by the Labour conference was:

“Conference calls on the Labour Party to demand that the government takes action now to end the housing crisis by:

- Fully funding councils to deliver the building of 150,000 social rent homes each year, including 100,000 council homes.
- Enshrine the right to adequate housing in domestic law, to ensure that future Governments respect, protect and fulfil the human right to adequate housing.
- Repeal the 2012 anti-squatting legislation, the Vagrancy Act and all legislation that criminalises being homeless. End the use of anti-social behaviour legislation against begging and rough sleeping.
- Scrapping the tax loophole on second homes and allowing councils to charge a levy on second homes to be used to provide local social housing.
- Giving local Councils additional planning powers in the form of change of use restrictions to restrict the number of second/holiday homes in areas where they are eroding the sustainability of local communities.
- End ‘right to buy’.
- End homelessness by implementing a national 'Housing First' system with floating support, to house all those experiencing homelessness regardless of immigration status.
- Reviewing council housing debt to address underfunding of housing revenue accounts.
- Ending Section 21 (no fault) evictions.
- Commit to strengthening tenants’ rights
- Commit to giving local authorities powers to compulsorily purchase development land that is being 'land-banked' and not developed by the landowner.
- Fund the retro-fitting of council housing to cut greenhouse gases, provide jobs and promote a shift from outsourcing to Direct Labour Organisations.
- Build disability housing and in the meantime encourage local councils to include houses specifically designed for single occupation or couples. This should, in the short term, include private developments.

Conference also calls upon Labour to place these actions at the centre of its housing policies.”

Visit our website

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