

Resolution Date: 19th July 2016

Resolution Title: The Housing and Planning Act – Continued Opposition

This branch notes that the Housing and Planning Act has now passed and is due to be implemented from April 2017 onwards. This destructive Act includes:

- New regulations expected in winter 2016/17 which will limit tenancies, although campaigning has successfully extended the maximum term from 5 to 10 years. Nonetheless, it will end the concept of 'lifetime tenancies' which allow families to settle and become part of a stable community;
- A compulsion for local councils to sell-off their most 'valuable' homes, with the proceeds to be used to pay for Right to Buy subsidies, including subsidising the extension of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants at the discretion of the association;
- The mandatory 'Pay to Stay' scheme for those in council housing with the exception of those receiving Housing Benefit. (Currently discretionary for housing associations) From April 2017, this will require households to pay an additional 15p in rent per week for every £1 they receive in taxable income above the thresholds of £40,000 in London and £31,000 elsewhere;
- To de-regulate the social housing sector, removing the need for housing associations to secure the Social Housing Regulator's consent before disposing of land. As there are no caveats to this, it includes tenanted social housing and former public sector land. The potential impact of which on social housing tenants has yet to be quantified; and
- To make councils set up a brownfield registers and give in principle planning permission to all land on this register, significantly increasing the likelihood of 'social cleansing' schemes which create luxury developments as investment opportunities, in place of housing for ordinary working people.

As a union branch representing housing workers, we condemn these proposals because they will do nothing to address the acute housing crisis for ordinary working people in all types of accommodation: social housing, private rented, and home ownership. All will suffer the negative ramifications of this Act and will continue being forced to live with increasing debt and/or in overcrowded, unstable, and unsuitable accommodation.

Resolution Title: The Housing and Planning Act – Continued Opposition

We therefore resolve:

1. To continue working within the trade union and community housing movement to oppose the Act, whilst also campaigning for an end to the crisis through mass council house building, security of tenure, and rent controls;
2. To call on Mayor, Sadiq Khan, Greater London Authority, councils, and housing associations to refuse to implement all aspects of the Act which harm tenants, and to continue issuing secure tenancies;
3. To seek discussions with employers about mitigating the negative impact of the Act on our members and the residents they serve;
4. To encourage members to add a 'housing supplement' to wage claims, affirming the need for decent pay to offset spiralling housing costs which are increasingly impoverishing our members, and to campaign for a £10 per hour Minimum Wage; and
5. To support members and groups to collectively resist evictions which result from spiralling housing costs and/or unscrupulous landlord behaviour.

The Housing and Planning Act is a further step toward the end of social housing provision in Britain. It seeks to remove the gains that were won by the working class over the years to improve their housing conditions and living standards. Just as these gains were won through mass struggles, so we will help to build a mass campaign to Axe the Act.