

Unite housing policy

Below are relevant extracts from the published summaries of policy conference decisions. There is also general support for nationalisation, a new clause 4 for Labour etc. But I didn't see anything very urgent on finance or construction.

2011

Unite affiliates to Defend Council Housing. Unite policy is in favour of more social housing and for local authorities to undertake new build and refurbishment strategies. This policy has been reflected in the work being done on the union's alternative economic strategy.

2012

Council housing, housing benefit and rent control

UNITE believes that access to decent, affordable, secure and accountable housing should be a basic human right. However, due to successive governments failed housing policies' there has been a burgeoning housing crisis developing in the UK over the last 30 years. The 'Right to Buy' has drastically reduced the number of council houses available for rent. The financial crisis and the reluctance of banks to lend money have effectively put home ownership beyond the reach of many working people. The private sector is unaffordable and cannot provide the homes needed. An increase in genuinely affordable and secure publicly owned homes for rent is vital.

Investment in existing and new council housing is needed to meet the housing crisis. It would also help stimulate the economic growth and provide jobs and apprenticeships. UNITE opposes any threats against secure tenancies, the forcing up of rents, and cuts that make it more difficult to access council housing, and UNITE deplores the attack on benefits via the national £26,000

benefit cap – the bulk of which is spent on housing benefits and will force hardship and poverty on many families. UNITE deplores the recent government announcement that young people under 25 will not qualify for housing benefit.

UNITE is committed to:

Support the campaign for a large scale national council house building programme;

Lobby to demand a future Labour Government invests in council housing to provide homes and jobs;

Work with the Labour Party to make it Labour Party policy to undertake a large scale council house building programme when returned to government;

Use influence at all levels within the Labour Party to persuade councils to support council housing, and, where possible, to bring outsourced services back 'in-house';

Continue to affiliate to and work with 'Defend Council Housing'

<http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk/dch/>;

Encourage and support Area Activist Committees to organise local housing emergency meetings and pressure the Government to allow affordable homes with an accountable landlord to be built;

Demand all money from rents and capital receipts should be ring-fenced to manage, maintain, repair and improve and build new council housing;

Lobby for rent controls to be reintroduced

Campaign to support and help young workers to fight against the removal of housing benefit for young people under 25

2014

Housing

Unite believes that the private sector cannot build affordable homes for working people in the number required. We need public sector investment in new council housing building on a massive scale as well as upgrading the existing council housing stock.

Unite is committed to:

- Campaign for:

- o A massive injection of public investment into a council housing building programme;

- o Requirements on Local Authorities to provide and maintain adequate levels of council housing at affordable rents;

- o An end to the right to buy scheme which only serves to remove good council homes from the overall council housing stock;

- o Rent controls and a cap on private rents to ensure they are affordable;

- o Registration/licensing of landlords in private rented sector;

- o Security of tenure for all those living in rented accommodation;

- o An end to unfair housing benefit caps and other draconian benefits cuts such as the Bedroom Tax.

- Council housing to be accessible to working people and not just the unemployed.

2016

Housing and Homes for All

Unite condemns the Government's failure to address the growing housing crisis and opposes the Housing and Planning Act.

We need public sector investment in new council house building on a massive scale as well as upgrading of the existing council housing stock. Public land should be used where possible to build a new generation of first-class council housing. Unite condemns any local authority willing to engage in social cleansing through the eviction of tenants and the forced dispersal of working class communities from their homes, which are then replaced with luxury accommodation at exorbitant rents. Unite demands an end to this practice and calls on all Labour controlled councils to refuse planning permission and/or funding for any project which requires the demolition of existing homes unless the developer agrees to rehouse those tenants in the new development once complete, and on the same contractual terms, rent and service cost levels as before.

Unite is committed to:

- Campaign for:
 - a massive injection of public investment into a council building programme;
 - requirements on Local Authorities and Housing Associations to provide and maintain adequate levels of council housing supply including meeting the changing needs of disabled workers for adaptations to their homes at affordable rents;
 - available accessible and affordable housing for disabled people in a safe location, near family and friends with access to services including public transport;
 - an end to the right to buy scheme; - rent controls and registration/licensing of landlords in privately rented accommodation;
 - security of tenure for all those living in rented accommodation;
 - an end to unfair housing benefit caps and other draconian benefits cuts such as the Bedroom Tax.
- Campaign to reverse the Housing and Planning Act and to work with the Labour Party to achieve its repeal;
- Call on councils and housing associations to unite in opposing the Act;
- Seek discussions with employers about the practical implications of the Act for our members;
- Be part of a national campaign demanding more decent, secure, genuinely affordable homes;
- Campaign for the end of backroom deals by luxury property developers and complete transparency in the planning application process and the end of the confidentiality of viability reports for new developments.

2018

Grenfell Tower

Unite is appalled at the national tragedy that is Grenfell Tower. Its burnt out hulk serves as a monument of shame to the appalling inequality in our society, the wilful neglect of social housing and its tenants, and the criminal irresponsibility of austerity spending cuts. We deplore the limitations of the current inquiry.

Unite is committed to:

- Call for the fullest and most transparent people's inquiry into the disaster and its causes and the need to cover much wider issues relating to:
 - o social housing neglect and access to council housing;
 - o de-regulation of building regulations and practices;
 - o cuts to fire services;
 - o inadequate standards of inspection and health and safety deregulation;
 - o failure to listen to tenants and effective de-recognition of tenants organisations;
 - o sub-contracting of building works;
 - o the removal of social housing from democratic accountability via housing management companies and organisations;
 - o austerity spending cuts and consequent shortcuts taken when commissioning exterior cladding works.

2021

Care Homes Contracts

Unite is committed to:

- Raise awareness of [unfair care home contracts and practices such as the charging of fees after death and the right to terminate contracts at short notice] with the National Pensioners' Convention, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum, Age UK, the TUC, the Scottish TUC and the Labour Party;
- Widely publicise these unfair practices and campaign for legislation to remove them.

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Care Homes

Unite is committed to:

- Social care, including residential care, provided on the same basis as health care, funded out of general taxation and free at the point of need;
- Where a private sector provider is facing bankruptcy or liquidation,

local authorities should be supported by central government to take over the running of homes in their area to ensure continuity both of provision and of employment for the staff in these homes;

- Call on a future Labour Government to end the market in social care and ensure that properly-funded high-quality residential care for all who require it, shaped by the involvement of older people and their families and consistent with the principle of supporting independent living;
- Make the above demands central to Unite's local and national campaigning activities and to set up a small interest group to ensure this happens

End Unfair Evictions

Unite is committed to:

- The abolition of Section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act, end 'No Fault' evictions and return to indefinite tenancies;
- Support the End Unfair Evictions campaign, including by publicising campaign events and activities as appropriate

Initial thoughts:

- Nothing we would oppose here.
- Agrees to affiliate to DCH and support something called "End Unfair Evictions campaign" but not SHAC. I don't think End unfair... is an organisation?
- Calls for end to no fault s21 1988 evictions but not for pre 1988 secure tenancies which we should spell out.
- Not specific about what type of rent control Unite wants. (Labour have looked at restricting rate of increase as have Generation Rent but Acorn and LRU say affordability)
- Support for council housing but nothing about housing associations now.
- Link investment need to recent disrepair issues + need for public investment. Explain role of private £ Blackrock etc.
- Underline social rent not (un) affordable housing.
- Add freeze social rent.
- Ban evictions during crisis – as Corbyn MacDonald + NEF argued
- Demands for investment linked to green stuff + energy saving could be included
- Democracy and HA's
- Post Grenfell safety issues: single staircase, escape plans, renationalise building regulation. Not just demands for central govt but also for councils – e.g. don't give approval for single staircase escape.

