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Open Letter to Andy Burnham

on the government's housing policy

LABOUR CAMPAIGN FOR COUNCIL HOUSING

thelabourcampaignforcouncilhousing.org

"To solve the housing crisis, the government must massively increase the number of council homes at social rent, both by building and buying back."

UNISON General Secretary Andrea Egan is supporting the Labour Campaign for Council Housing's Open Letter to Any Burnham on the government's housing policy.

Andrea said:

"Selling off council homes was a catastrophic policy failure, and we're still paying for it. Families and vulnerable people across the country languish on waiting lists and in precarious temporary accommodation.

To solve the housing crisis, the government must massively increase the number of council homes at social rent, both by building and buying back.

Council housing should be the centrepiece of the government's policy. The market cannot deliver the homes our communities desperately need."

The Letter highlights the gulf between the government's rhetoric and its actual policy. Instead of "the largest council house building programme since the post war years", council housing is just a marginal part of the Social & Affordable Homes Programme. Funding for social rent homes offered just 18,000 per year, **just 6% of the government's 300,000 target**. The extra £1.5 billion announced will only add 10,000 homes over a decade. In the first tranche of funding for "Strategic Partners" only 3 councils were included, with grant for only 2,811 homes over 10 years. The SAHP has no funding ringfenced for council housing. Councils have to compete for grant with housing associations, 'for-profit providers', developers and private house builders.

The Letter calls on the government to

- A programme of at least 90,000 new build or acquired social rent homes annually;
- Dedicated and substantially increased funding for council house building;
- The abolition of Right to Buy;
- The cancellation of council housing debt;
- An end to funding so-called Affordable Rent homes;
- A publicly funded programme of retrofitting existing homes; and
- The abandonment of plans for a decade of above-inflation rent increases.

Although it received no media attention, the Labour Party conference passed a composite motion which incorporated a housing resolution from the union UNITE, which included these demands.

If the government is to promote "the largest council house building programme since the post-war years" then it has to recognise that the Social & Affordable Homes Programme as currently constituted cannot possibly achieve that. It needs to make social rent council housing its first housing priority, give councils the means to build and acquire on the scale that is needed and enable councils to improve existing homes.

The text of the Letter can be read here: letter-to-andy-burnham-nov-26.pdf

To sign the Letter email labourcouncilhousingcampaign@gmail.com