

## SPRING CONFERENCE 2019

### An Affordable Future for Welsh Housing

#### Conference notes:

- A. That over 60,000 people were on the social housing waiting list in 2018.
- B. The Progressive Agreement between the Welsh Liberal Democrats and the First Minister is implementing our manifesto commitments of building 20,000 new affordable homes and delivering a Rent to Own model.
- C. The ongoing Affordable Housing Supply Independent Review commissioned by the Welsh Government in August 2018.
- D. The number of households at risk of homelessness ('eligible and homeless') rose by 57% to 10,884 in 2017/18 and data available from the first two quarters of 2018/19 show the rise continuing.
- E. Data from the Residential Landlords Association showing the number of private rented homes in Wales is decreasing.
- F. That housing is a major contributor to carbon emissions, making up 7.5% of Welsh emissions, yet 23% of households are in fuel poverty.
- G. That Wales' affordable housing crisis is particularly unjust for young people, who unlike their parents are unable to own their own home.
- H. Letting fees can be a substantial financial burden for those renting homes, but that simply banning these fees could simply lead to equivalent rent increases.

#### Conference believes:

- a. That homelessness is a societal problem rather than simply an individual one.
- b. That poverty is the biggest cause of homelessness across society, although a variety of complex factors can push individuals into homelessness.
- c. Only the Welsh Government can overcome the chronic undersupply of social housing in Wales, working with local government and housing associations to deliver solutions.

- d. That a functioning housing market must have a mixture of social homes, privately rented properties and owner occupier to deliver choice and ensure everyone's needs are met.
- e. That having the freedom to own your own home is a long-standing liberal principle, but it should not come at the expense of the rest of the housing sector or wider society through huge subsidies.
- f. That planning policy has a key role to play in solving the housing crisis and building more affordable homes.
- g. That Welsh Liberal Democrat commitments to increase the supply of affordable housing must be backed up by the support of local liberal democrats for affordable housing in their areas.
- h. Every household in Wales should be able to live in safe, secure and affordable housing and the Welsh Liberal Democrats should take every step necessary to make this aspiration a reality.

#### **Conference calls on the Welsh Government to:**

- i. Research how many additional homes Wales is likely to require over the next decade and explore how this demand could feasibly be met and funded.
- ii. Ensure that new social homes are built to low carbon developments and are accessible.
- iii. Support the development of zero carbon homes to minimise costs for residents and help combat climate change.
- iv. Ensure that all local authorities have at least one provider of the Housing First model of provision for long term, entrenched homeless people.
- v. Examine the success of the *Homes as Power Stations* pilot project in Neath Port Talbot and use the lessons learnt to establish similar projects across Wales.
- vi. Expand the Rent to Own programme so more people can utilise the scheme.
- vii. Reform the private rented sector so that the Residential Property Tribunal has the power to act as a 'housing court' dealing with challenges to rent increases and to adjudicate and mediate disputes, whilst still allowing landlords to retake control of their properties when needed.
- viii. Review the impact of planning policy on affordable housing and examine the case for reforming planning law to promote increased affordable housebuilding.
- ix. Ensure appropriate housing exists for a variety of demographics; so that communities include sufficient one- and two-bedroom homes and don't just feature three- and four-bedroom houses.

- x. Explore the potential of innovative alternative housing such as block container flats to help Wales meet its demand for affordable housing.

**Conference calls on Local Authorities to:**

1. Provide emergency accommodation for homeless people that is safe and satisfies the needs of both those with continuing substance misuse issues and those that feel they cannot safely be around those consuming drugs.
2. Create Local Development Plans that fully embrace housebuilding and establish clear strategies for delivering this increased affordable housing. Using innovative community engagement to address the concerns of existing residents in communities.