

Council 14 March, 2019

Housing

Labour Group to move:

Council notes that:

- 1 In January 2019, a cross-party commission, convened by housing charity Shelter in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, published a report *A vision for social housing*, finding that the roots of the current housing crisis can be found in the decline of social housing over the past four decades.
- 2 The report found that this decline in social housing has resulted in a failure to build enough homes to meet demand, huge waiting lists for social homes, an explosion in the number of people in private rented accommodation and a huge rise in welfare costs to government as a result of more people renting privately at higher cost.
- 3 The report further found that, unless a radically different approach is adopted, only half of today's young people are ever likely to own their own home. A generation of young families will be trapped in private rented property for their whole lives, with increasing numbers living in dangerous accommodation or going into debt. More people will grow old in private rentals, facing unaffordable rent increases or eviction at any point. Billions more in welfare costs will be paid to private landlords and hundreds of thousands more people will become homeless as a result of insecure tenancies and sky-high housing costs.
- 4 The report recommends a decisive and generational shift in housing policy. This would require:
 - investment in social housing;
 - a new regulator working across social and private renting to protect residents and to set and enforce common standards;
 - a new national tenants' organisation to give social housing residents a voice; and
 - a historic renewal of social housing with a 20 year programme to deliver 3.1 million more social homes.
- 5 Capital Economics set out in detail the costs and benefits of a 20-year social home building programme and found that while the gross additional cost would be on average £10.7 billion per year this gross cost would be reduced firstly by direct benefits to government of increased infrastructure spending and savings in the welfare system, and secondly by the returns to government arising from the knock-on economic benefits across the economy. Taking all this into account, the maximum net cost to government in the most expensive year could be £5.4 billion and if funded in the early years through borrowing, the programme pays back in full over 39 years.
- 6 In Bath and North East Somerset, there are around 5,000 households on the housing waiting list and currently 27 households in temporary accommodation.

This Council believes that:

- 7 In line with the vision outlined in the Shelter report, all political parties need to rediscover publicly built housing as a key pillar of our national infrastructure. A home is the foundation of individual success in life and a programme of home building can be the foundation of similar national success.
- 8 A major increase in the delivery of social housing is required to address the housing crisis in B&NES.

Council resolves therefore:

- 9 To publicly back the principles and solutions outlined in the Shelter report.
- 10 To start building Council housing again.

- 11 To change the priorities of ADL, to ensure that more social rented homes are built and rented out by the Council, not by a housing association.
- 12 To encourage parish councils to use their powers to purchase land and build council houses for local key workers and provide support for community led and community owned affordable housing.
- 13 To investigate the provision of more funding to enable the re-possession, refurbishment and sale of derelict properties, to develop homes above shops and garages and to adapt empty commercial and operational properties to provide temporary housing for homeless people.
- 14 To ensure that all rented property is decent and safe by investigating the extension of the present (self funded) licensing scheme to all rented properties, on a rolling basis, not just HMOs. To require all eligible landlords to apply for a licence but in order to encourage landlords to rent property at or below the Local Housing Allowance Rate, to exempt those doing so from the licensing fee.
- 15 To propose to Government that Bath, where rents are higher, becomes a separate Broad Rental Market Area to North East Somerset, where rents are lower.
- 16 To enforce minimum levels of affordable housing in new developments using the Local Housing Allowance as the upper limit, including service charges, to determine whether a housing development is genuinely affordable and to rigorously scrutinise all developers claims that a scheme will not be viable if it is made to conform to B&NES standards of social housing supply.