

POLICY PROCESS 2023

Housing

Our policy platform sets the agenda for our party and its representatives, and puts forward our programme for Parliament. In the tradition of co-operation, our policy process is member-led and this is your opportunity to shape the ideas we'll take to all levels of Government.

This year, the policy consultation will focus on housing policy only – as we are in the process of developing our General Election Manifesto. Members are invited to share their views and ideas through our consultation, running until **9th June 2023**.

There are a number of ways to get involved – you could attend your local party meeting to discuss the topics and share your collective views, or send your individual answers to us.

Resources and support are available to help you convene your meetings online, and you can also learn more at one of our regional conferences happening through the year – where expert speakers will debate these issues with our members.

Your contributions will be collected and considered by the NEC's policy sub-committee, who use your ideas and feedback to shape policy proposals. These will be brought to the Co-operative Party annual conference in the Autumn for delegates to debate and vote on.

This housing consultation provides questions for all nations of the UK, so please answer the questions for your specific nation to help ensure we develop strong policy proposals for all constituent nations.

These housing questions are a guide for members. We do encourage you to share anything they feel is relevant to the debate and should not feel obliged to answer every single question either.

England

Power & Rights

Despite the Government's rhetoric on levelling-up, many people still feel powerless when it comes to housing. Tenants and leaseholders often feel ignored as landlords and housing authorities fail to deliver good quality homes. New powers and rights will be needed to create a housing system which is equitable and accountable across the country.

Questions

- How should we devolve further powers on housing policy to local communities and local authorities? Should Metro Mayors play a role in this? Please can you give example of how this could work?
- Please do let us know your thoughts on increasing accountability on housing issues – for example, Homes England.
- What more is needed to ensure the rights of private renters to safe, secure, quality housing?
- What should a new package of private renters' rights look like? E.g., ban on no fault eviction, etc. How can we ensure these rights incorporate the co-operative values?
- How can we promote greater tenant voice in social housing? Please share examples of initiatives on tenant voice.
- How can we encourage active participation amongst tenants in tenant's rights organisations?
- How can we ensure we take learnings from where co-operative housing models haven't worked or have failed to deliver full benefits for their members?
- How can we build tenant voice in the housing association sector?

Energy Efficiency & Quality

Energy prices have been a key driver in the cost-of-living crisis, forces people to choose between heating and eating. The UK's homes are among the least energy efficient in Europe, contributing to a huge wastage of energy and rising household energy bills. Real action is required to lower energy bills by improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock and promoting the use of renewable energy sources.

Questions

- What can be done to urgently improve the energy efficiency of the UK's homes?

- How can we enable retrofit co-ops to play a leading role in improving the energy efficiency of the nation's homes? Please provide examples of different models.
- What actions are required to ensure people's health is not put at risk by poor quality housing? How can we ensure there is adequate protection?
- How can we support the uptake of renewable energy sources on Britain's homes? E.g. installation of solar panels, etc.
- How can we ensure the UK's building regulations deliver good quality homes and prevent tragedies, such as Grenfell, from ever happening again?
- How can we ensure new housing is inclusive and accessible for a wide array of different needs? E.g. disabled accessibility
- What is the best mechanism to ensure effective delivery of repairs and upkeep of social and affordable housing?

Availability

The failure to replace sold off social housing stock and deliver on house building targets has meant availability of housing is a vital issue. New housing is required which is high-quality and provides diverse facilities for a wide-range of residents. New co-operative and specialist housing should be part of the solution to the availability crisis – providing housing options which are genuinely affordable and accessible for all residents.

Questions

- What are the barriers to delivering more co-operative housing?
- How can we ensure greater availability of specialist housing (e.g. disabled, elderly, etc.)?
- Marginalised groups often face discrimination in housing provision. How can housing co-operatives provide a solution to this issue?
- What should be in a national co-operative housing strategy?
- How can we ensure appropriate housing for refugees? For example, promote refugee housing co-operatives.

Funding & Capacity

The growth of the co-operative and community-led housing sector has been held back by the lack of appropriate funding and capacity. House building in the UK is an expensive undertaking, dominated by volume house builders. A new alternative is required which can develop different forms of co-operative, social and affordable housing across the UK at scale, with new funding mechanism in place to achieve this and support new co-operative and SME house builders.

Questions

- How can we ensure there is appropriate funding for co-operative housing developments?
- How can we encourage financial institutions and investors to provide the funding needed to enable the development of co-operative housing and new co-operative house builders?
- How can we ensure new co-operative housing is delivered at scale across the nation?
- What measures are required to protect co-operative housing tenure and prevent it from changing model?

Affordability

The affordability of housing has been a substantial issue for many years – pricing people out of both rental and ownership. The UK's has failed to replace the social housing sold off under the Right to Buy provision, while high demand has pushed up housing prices ceaselessly in major cities. New approaches to housing provision will be needed to deliver affordable housing to all forms of tenancy and ownership.

Questions

- How can we expand awareness and best practice on student housing co-ops, so they are an option open to students across the country?
- How can co-operative housing models increase the affordability of England's homes?
- What role can co-operative societies play in funding new affordable co-operative housing developments?
- How should national planning authorities define affordable housing?
- What actions are required to ensure that Airbnb and second homes do not inflate housing prices and cut out local people out of housing provision?

Land use & Planning

Productive use of land and effective planning is essential to developing communities which people can be healthy and happy in. By adopting a new approach, planning and development can deliver new communities which have high quality housing, infrastructure and services. To achieve this, we will need to ensure land can be freed up for new development more effectively – preventing the practice of land banking and speculation.

Questions

- How can we increase the development and usage of Community Land Trusts (CLTs)?
- What action is required to end land banking and speculation, to ensure a consistent supply of new homes and effective land?
- What changes are needed to improve land assembly for housing development?
- How can we ensure there is adequate infrastructure and public service availability for new housing developments? Should this include an Infrastructure First approach to housing development?
- Could local housing development plans give priority to co-operative housing projects?
- Should we support the creation and development of New Towns and Garden Cities?

Scotland

Questions

- What is required to increase the availability of new homes?
- How can we ensure new home building takes place in order to increase the supply of new homes?
- What is required from a support body in order to assist in the growth of co-operative housing in Scotland?
- How can we incentivise energy efficiency upgrades in owner occupied homes?
- What can be done to achieve scale in student co-operative housing?
- How can we ensure appropriate housing for refugees? For example, promote refugee housing co-operatives.

Wales

Questions

- What action needs to be taken to enable effective public land disposal for social and affordable housing development?
- What needs to happen to enable the growth of external financing of community led housing developments?
- How can the planning system be made easier to navigate for community led housing developers?
- How can we raise public awareness of co-operative and community-led housing options?
- How could local authorities work more effectively together to deliver greater housing provision?
- Should we introduce a ringfenced funding stream for new community led housing developments?
- How can we ensure vacant homes and properties are brought back into use for housing?

Northern Ireland

Questions

- How could a mutual model help to revive the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and help it to be more accountable?
- How can we facilitate greater external investment into the Northern Ireland Housing Executive? Would a mutual model enable greater investment whilst retaining a democratic structure?
- How can we broaden the financial options available to housing associations in Northern Ireland in order to facilitate greater new home building?
- How should we promote tenant voice and co-operative model for student housing in the private rented sector?
- The co-operative housing sector is small in Northern Ireland. How can we facilitate the growth of this sector? Could Northern Irish co-operative societies play a part in growth?

Appendix

Co-operative Housing – What is it?

A housing co-op is a co-operative organisation which owns real estate property – typically a residential building.


The housing co-operative model is democratic and membership based – with each member having a right to occupy a unit and vote on matters relating to the co-operative. The co-operative model, in which resources are pooled, typically allows the costs of housing to be lowered for member residents.

There are two main forms of housing co-operative – ownership and non-ownership. In non-ownership models, the housing co-op rents the property from a landlord; while in ownership models the co-op owns the property outright.

Community-led Housing is a form of housing development with substantial community engagement on design and development – helping to ensure new housing provision is affordable and meets community needs. Community groups have participation in development and then later stewardship of the housing development. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are democratic, non profit organisations that own and develop land for the benefit of the community – including affordable housing, civic spaces, shops and community gardens. They help to enable community to shape the future of their local areas for the better.

Tenant management organisations (TMOs) are bodies which enable residents to take over the management of housing association and council housing stock. These are democratic organisations which allow residents to run and manage their own homes. In some instances, they may take the form of co-operatives.

Whether it is access to good quality, affordable food or decent workplace conditions, the co-operative movement has long been part of this work. Community Wealth Building, too, looks at health and local economic outcomes and their relationship. In Cleveland, Ohio, the original Community Wealth Building work was led by the Cleveland Clinic who used the power of their procurement to invest in employee ownership and reinvestment of local wealth. There are also examples like the Lambeth GP Food Co-op who use innovative community models to do social prescribing.

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