

Full Council – 21 September 2022

1st Labour Group Motion

A Place to Call Home: Safety and Security for tenants during the cost-of-renting crisis.

Full Council notes:

1. London is one of the most expensive places to rent in Europe, while Brent is the second most expensive outer-London borough.
2. Rents have risen three times faster than wages since 2010 and continue to rise, by 15.8% in the year to May 2022. The London Renters Union branch in Brent is regularly seeing rent increases of 30%, 40% or even 50%, contributing to the cost of living emergency and pricing residents out of the borough.
3. Brent has also seen a significant dent in first-time buyer affordability, with the average price paid up by more than double the national average. Those buying their first home in the borough now pay a huge £89,753 increase compared to pre-pandemic market values.
4. People under 30 are facing a growing cost-of-renting crisis. According to recent reports, 4 in 10 of this age group are now spending more than 30% of their pay on rent.
5. In Brent there are over 22,880 households containing 53,644 individuals that remain on the housing waiting list, with an average waiting time for a 3-bedroom council property typically over a decade.
6. Brent Council is continuing to tackle the demand for affordable homes by increasing supply, with a target of 5,700 affordable homes to be built by 2028, of which, 1,700 will be built by the Council.

This Council further notes:

1. While the government has rejected calls for intervention, rent controls are common practice in Europe, both regulating the initial rent that landlords can charge, and the rate of rent increase within tenancies.
2. Brent Labour has made a commitment on behalf of renters to use its voice to call upon the government to introduce new legislation to regulate rent

increases, strengthen enforcement and improve the energy standards of the rental sector.

3. That the government is consulting on capping rents for council and housing association homes to prevent them from rising significantly. Although welcome, it will come at significant cost to councils and registered providers that will absorb the brunt of inflation, with no funding announcements made by government to match the steep shortfall in income.
4. Like inflation, energy bill increases serve only to impact residents that are already struggling in some of the worst housing conditions.

This Council believes:

1. That the pandemic has shown that regulating the actions of landlords is a political choice and they can be regulated for the public good at times of crisis.
2. Without intervention in the private rented sector, rents will continue to rise causing economic hardship, instability and homelessness for tens of thousands of Brent residents.
3. The government must rethink mechanisms to regulate the cost of rents and ensure that low and middle income tenants do not have to spend more than a third of their income on rent.
4. The Renters Reform Bill is an essential piece of legislation for renters' security. In order to meet its aims, rent rises within tenancy must be limited so that landlords cannot evict through massive rent hikes.
5. As energy bills soar, private tenants' right to a warm home should be protected and landlords should be required by the council to meet the legislation relating to energy efficiency.

This Council resolves to:

1. Publicly support the Mayor of London's call for a two-year rent freeze within the private rented sector and the introduction of rent controls to help ease the cost of living crisis facing Londoners.
2. Work with the Mayor of London to make the case for Brent to participate in the "right-to-buy-back" scheme – and help bring more properties back into public ownership.
3. Create a new Private Renters Strategy, mapping out the council's approach to enforcement, our support available to tenants; and our plans to bring more of the 2,734 empty properties in Brent back to the market.
4. Work with London Renters Union and Advice for Renters to support the case for a borough-wide selective licensing scheme covering the 40,000 PRS properties in Brent that would drive up standards.

5. Urge the new Secretary of State to expedite the commitments to renters in the recent white paper, including: the removal of Section 21 evictions, the introduction of a rental sector ombudsman, the outlawing of discrimination against benefit claimants, and the application of the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector for the first time.

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