

# HUSING



## WINTER WAR-FRONT

The Shadow Cabinet reshuffle announced by Keir Starmer at the end of November has the feel of clearing the decks for a potential General Election.

**Keir Starmer said:** *"The Labour Party I lead is focused on the priorities of the country. With this reshuffle, we are a smaller, more focused shadow cabinet that mirrors the shape of the government we are shadowing. We must hold the Conservative government to account on behalf of the public and demonstrate that we are the right choice to form the next government."*

*"I'm particularly delighted that Lisa Nandy will take on the vital role of shadowing Michael Gove and leading on the levelling up agenda. After 11 years of Conservative mismanagement of our economy, delivering prosperity to all regions and nations in the UK will be a defining mission of the next Labour government, and there will be nobody better than Lisa to lead this work."*

Lisa will be supported by Matthew Pennycook (Shadow Minister for Housing and Planning) and Mike Amesbury in the local government team



With thanks to the Daily Mirror

Lisa Nandy, Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing, Communities & Local Government

## LABOUR HOUSING GROUP - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

# AGM 2022

**The next LHG Annual General Meeting is planned for Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022.**

You won't be surprised to know that the details are subject to change, thanks to Covid19 and any of its variants! It will be when we agree key policies and elect our new Executive Committee for the following two years.

If you want to be able to vote or nominate someone at the AGM, then you need to be fully paid-up by 15th January. If you want to stand for the Executive, you need to have been a member for a year by the date of the AGM.

# LOOKING FORWARD

As I write these words it looks as though Johnson's arrogant disdain for rules, lazy disregard for the hard work of governing and belief that his holding of high office is a matter of personal entitlement is finally catching up with him.

At the same time, the Labour frontbench has been revitalised and renewed, started landing some serious blows on the Government and is now going into 2022 with a clear, though not yet sustained, lead in the polls.

So, I look towards 2022 with a sense of optimism, though not complacency. There is still an awful lot of work to do: from ensuring that we convert our current poll lead into actual votes and victories at the May local elections to crafting a convincing vision and offer that we can take to the country at the general election, whenever that comes.

## **Action on housing must be at the heart of that offer.**

Over ten years of Tory rule have created the deepest housing crisis in living memory, with record levels of homelessness, rocketing rough sleeping and 119,000 children marooned in temporary accommodation and B&Bs.

We have seen the stripping away of tenants' rights and a disregard for regulation and standards that culminated in the horror that claimed so many lives at Grenfell.

Decent, secure and genuinely affordable housing is about much more than just a roof over your head. It is the platform upon which we build healthy, happy, better lives and communities.

Good housing policy is the essential foundation for good education, health and economic policies too: a precondition for ensuring we can deliver on all of Labour's other ambitions for Britain.

Over the last year, we've started to flesh out the details of Labour's housing offer and the early signs are encouraging.

The resolution passed by Annual Conference, which I was honoured to move on behalf of Labour Housing Group, commits the party to enshrining the right to adequate housing in law, finally establishing housing as a human right in our country.

It goes on to set out the practical steps for turning this commitment into a reality: from the building of 150,000 homes for social rent each year (of which two thirds will be council housing), to scrapping the tax loopholes on second homes; from action to end land banking by developers to funding the retrofitting of council housing.

It is a bold start, and on that I believe will resonate with a country desperate for real action on housing.



But we still have much more work to do in 2022, not only in doing more "heavy lifting" on detailed policy development, but also in translating policy into hard hitting messages that we can use on the doorstep.

Labour Housing Group will continue to be active on both fronts in the coming year, working closely with the new frontbench team led by Lisa Nandy and across the whole of the Labour movement.

**2022 can be the year when Labour turns the tide on this dreadful Government and takes those vital strides back towards election victory and national power.** I know that all of us in LHG are up for the fight and getting stuck into the hard work that lies ahead.

**This is a New Year that offers opportunities to be seized. Let's make sure we seize them!**

*John Cotton, Chair of Labour Housing Group, is a Labour Councillor for the Glebe Farm and Tile Cross Ward of Birmingham City Council on which he is the Cabinet Member - Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities. He attended Labour Conference this year as LHG's delegate.*

# FIRE SAFETY - ON THE BACK BURNER?

*When the staff aren't partying hard, it seems our favourite Government Department struggles to get to grips with vital work in the way we would all hope. Our imaginative mole tells the story like this...*

**Sir Humphrey:** "Minister, you asked me to report progress to you on the matter of fire safety in tall buildings."

**Minister for Media**

**Matters:** "Yes, a very, very, sad issue. Well, when do you expect to have it resolved?"

**Sir H:** "Resolved, Minister?"

**MfMM:** "Yes, of course. How's it going?"

**Sir H:** "It's certainly going, Minister, though I couldn't say precisely where at this moment."

**MfMM:** "Heavens, man, hasn't it been "going" long enough already?"

**Sir H:** "Perfectly true, Minister."

**MfMM:** "So what's holding us up?"

**Sir H:** "That's not easy to say, Minister. Each time the matter receives coverage in the media, the prospect of a solution seems to retreat further. Your predecessor adopted the position that *dormant canines should be disturbed as infrequently as possible*."

**MfMM:** "He was hoping it would just go away?"

**Sir H:** "That would be a very negative interpretation, Minister."

**MfMM:** "You have a better one?"

No, I rather thought not. So what are the obstacles?"

**Sir H:** "There's the enquiry, of course. The local borough is acting like a schoolboy stood outside the Headmaster's study, waiting to hear how many



strokes of the cane he is going to receive."

**MfMM:** "Go on."

**Sir H:** "Then there's Treasury, waiting to see how long it will take the Press to get bored and the residents to give up. They really are very good at just waiting."

**MfMM:** "Who else?"

**Sir H:** "Well, the Cabinet Office is more circumspect. Which is to say, they allow each new Minister to come up with some ideas to tackle the issue."

**MfMM:** "And do they support him? Or her. Whatever."

**Sir H:** "They don't see that as their role, Minister. They don't like to be seen as second-guessing the PM. Or his wife, for that matter."

**MfMM:** "So what do they do, then?"

**Sir H:** "Mostly, they wait for the next reshuffle."

**MfMM:** "So it's hopeless, then?"

**Sir H:** "Oh no, Minister. We just need Treasury to stump up a few billion or local authorities to accept responsibility but without the funds to do the job. Then, if we promise all the *Sir Robert the Builders* immunity from prosecution, however badly their people behaved, we might get some work started."

Of course, that's if interest rates don't soar and the shortages of labour and materials don't put the whole thing back a decade."

**MfMM:** "And does the PM think we can get away with this? No, don't tell me, of course he does."



# GREEN HOMES GRANT FIASCO

A Government scheme introduced in September 2020 and intended to help households become more energy efficient was scrapped in March following low take-up.

The Green Homes Grant promised to upgrade 600,000 homes, but just 15,000 lower income homes had insulation measures fitted.

Although the Grant offered vouchers worth up to £5,000 for most homeowners and those on low incomes could receive vouchers up to a maximum of £10,000, few took advantage.

Despite an initial budget of £2 billion, just £71.3 million worth of vouchers had been allocated by January, so the Government cut £1 billion from the Grant.

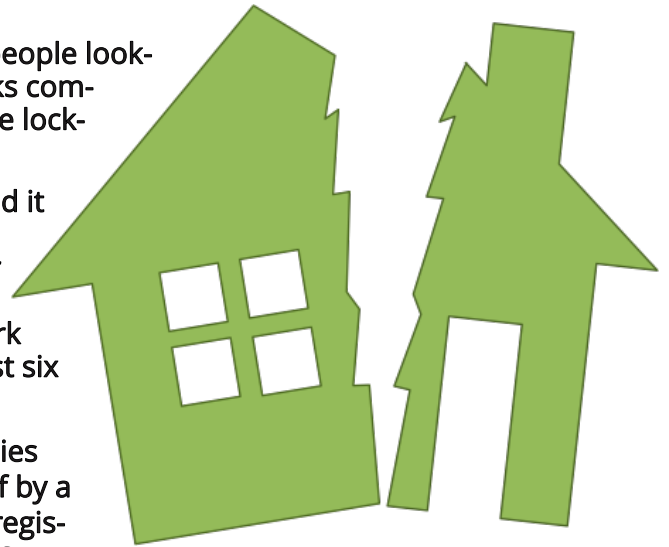
Unsurprisingly, many households were unable to find suitable tradespeople due to

the number of people looking to have works completed during the lockdown period.

Often, they found it impossible not only to apply for the voucher but also have all work completed in just six months.

Smaller companies were also put off by a long and costly registration process. Some businesses offering home upgrades had to lay off staff because of payment problems – just the opposite of the “green jobs” creation that the government had promised.

Parliament’s Environmental Audit Committee said the scheme was “rushed in conception and poorly implemented ... [the] scheme administration appears nothing short of disastrous”.



They added: “The impact of its botched implementation has had devastating consequences on many of the builders and installers that can do the work, who have been left in limbo as a result of the orders cancelled and time taken to approve applications.”

**The 2035 target for all new heating systems in UK homes to be energy-efficient is looking to be a big ask at this rate of progress.**

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## TENANTS ARE DOIN’ IT FOR THEMSELVES!

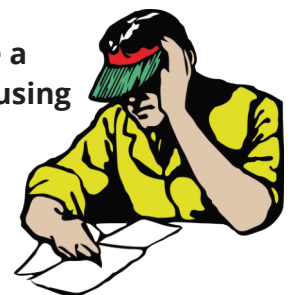
Our sister publication, [RedBrickBlog](#), has featured work by the Northern Housing Consortium to organise and publicised the findings of the *Social Housing Tenants’ Climate Jury*.

This group has consulted its members and come up with 19 recommendations to guide the approach to dealing with the work of preparing homes for climate change.

You can see the full list of recommendations [here](#).

The findings include insights into just how difficult the ‘simple’ task of installing loft insulation can be for many tenants and the support that will be needed

**If you would like to make a contribution to LHG’s Housing Newsletter, please email the Editor at [pauljmartin@clara.co.uk](mailto:pauljmartin@clara.co.uk)**



# WOLVES v. TORIES?

## WHERE IS THE MINISTER?



*Alas, poor Jenrick!*

We never thought we'd say it, but *poor Robert Jenrick!*

The ex-Minister now without any kind of portfolio, has taken another bullet for his political masters.

As a Wolverhampton MP, he was happy to claim credit in February this year for his Department's new "HQ" in the i9 building, Wolverhampton.

It was due to receive "at least 150 staff" last summer as part of establishing "the first ministerial department" outside of London.

This initiative was trumpeted by Michael Gove as something entirely new. Although thousands of civil servants have been based outside of London for decades, the promise was that Ministers would be located there, too.

Sadly for Jenrick, the subsequent Cabinet reshuffle cast him out of the **Ministry of Housing, Communities and**

**Local Government** and into the wilderness, only for serial-rat Gove to claim the prize and, as usual, rename his organisation, in this case to the ludicrous "**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.**"



*Whether intensely ambitious Michael Gove can bear to be away from the centre of intrigue in Westminster remains to be seen.*

### Footnote

The i9 building was an initiative of Wolverhampton's Labour-controlled City Council as part of a multi-million-pound commercial district in the heart of the city, near to a new, award-winning railway station with good connections to London, Birmingham and Manchester.

## LABOUR HOUSING GROUP'S NEW PARLIAMENTARY BRANCH



LHG was intending to launch its new Parliamentary Branch on Zoom meeting on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December, but it has had to be rescheduled due to urgent Parliamentary business.

**The agenda includes contributions from branches and we would very much like to see new branches set-up, particularly in the East of England or in Yorkshire and Humberside**

## LHG EXECUTIVE 2020-2022

*LHG's Executive was elected at the AGM 21st March 2020 for the two years to 2022.*

### Executive members

Andy Bates (co-opted)

Janet Berry

John Bevan

Rachel Blake

Nick Bragger (co-opted)

John Cotton

Ed Derrick

Gerard Heffey (co-opted)

Ross Houston

Heather Johnson

Paul Martin

Amanda Pinnock

Sheila Spencer

Christopher Worrall  
(co-opted)

## WHAT IS THE LABOUR HOUSING GROUP?

The Labour Housing Group is a lobbying group that is affiliated to the Labour Party and dedicated to the development of a socialist housing policy.

You can contact us at <http://labourhousing.org/contact> and join us at <https://labourhousing.org/membership/>

Individuals must be members of the Labour Party and agree to be bound by Labour Party rules and the LHG constitution.

# YOU CAN \$TILL HE£P

If you are too busy to give time and energy, you can still help us in our work by making a donation by bank transfer to:

"Labour Housing Group", Account number 50478080, Sort code 08-90-06,

Co-operative Bank, PO Box 1AN, Blandford Street, Newcastle, NE99 1AN.

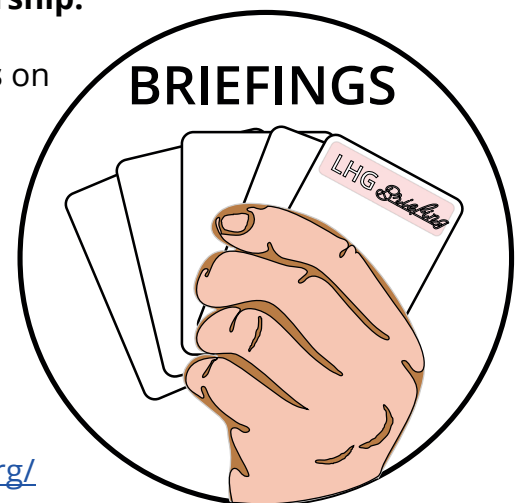
Of course, you can also send a cheque made payable to "Labour Housing Group" c/o **The Treasurer, Flat 2, 8 Torrington Park, London N12 9SS**

*Please quote "40th Anniversary"*

**For readers new to housing policy issues, *Labour Housing Group* publishes a series of short guides aimed at a wide readership.**

Our published **Briefings** on current topics include *Homelessness, Rough Sleeping, Affordable Housing, Private Renting Sector, Rural Housing* and *Leasehold Reform*.

They can be found at:  
<https://labourhousing.org/resources/lhg-briefings/>



**The latest edition covers *Council Homes*.**

If you would like to contribute, please email our Policy Officer, Paul Martin at [pauljmartin@clara.co.uk](mailto:pauljmartin@clara.co.uk).

*Opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Labour Housing Group.*