



Emergency surgery

"Decent housing is the life blood of decent communities so right now we will be watching to see if Yvette Cooper can perform surgery and stop the blood lost" warned Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive of the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE).

Responding to the newly created post of Minister for Housing, which will give Yvette Cooper access to cabinet meetings, Paul O'Brien warmly welcomed the new post and stated **"At last the issue of housing has made it to the heart of government . At the cabinet table. It is long over due. Councils throughout the UK and of every political denomination are facing a housing crisis with young people unable to get on to the housing ladder and key workers being driven away by rising house prices"**.

- APSE has campaigned for the right for local councils to be given wide sweeping powers to build more homes for the socially rented sector
- APSE has also campaigned for the ability for council tenants to remain with the council if they so choose rather than be forced into outsourcing options such as Arms Length Management Organisations or Registered Social Landlords before funding can be offered to bring homes up to a decent standard
- APSE has had a dialogue with all the main political parties in the last year to try and build a political consensus on housing and has developed a major policy paper aimed at moving from the current '*Decent Homes Standard*' to a '*Decent Neighbourhoods Standard*' to ensure that housing and communities are considered together in redevelopment, and new development projects and to better integrate social and affordable housing into sustainable communities
- APSE works with over 300 councils throughout the UK across all political parties and believes that social housing should be a decent affordable option for all - not a social safety net - to address the growing desperation of young people and families unable to get onto the housing ladder
- Average house prices in England have risen by 90% since 2000 forcing the break-down of communities with many who cannot afford to buy homes in their own area
- 1 in 7 children are growing up in either homeless or badly housed households

- Since the introduction of 'Right to Buy' allowing council tenants to purchase their own homes 1.7 million council homes have been transferred into private ownership - depleting the stock available to rent but with councils fettered from building new homes to replace the ones sold off.

In closing Paul O'Brien stated "**Councillors up and down the country will be keeping a watching brief on Ms Cooper and expecting rapid intervention to end the housing crisis. Whilst this new post is welcome it must not signal a return to housing being treated within a silo mentality. Housing should be seen as part of a co-ordinated approach to our communities.**"

Ends

- APSE works with over 300 local authorities throughout the UK specialising in helping local authorities with frontline services such as environmental services and housing and building maintenance
- APSE website is www.apse.org.uk which contains a wealth of specialist information about local authority services
- APSE is able to provide media interviews. Please contact Mo Baines on 0161 772 1810 or mobile 07971 843515 or for a more detailed briefing email mbaines@apse.org.uk