

Luisa Porritt for Mayor 2021

Ending Fuel Poverty

We take seriously the challenge presented by fuel poverty, both in London and nationally. London is at a turning point because of COVID-19, presenting an opportunity to rethink how we can both address London's current housing crisis and also present a sustainable, long-term model for providing homes, to ensure that everyone is able to heat and power their homes efficiently and without falling into poverty. We believe this to be important for both people and for their communities, and as well tackle the impacts of climate change, for the planet.

Our policies are as follows:

Support for current renters

We will end the high risk and uncertainty presented by the private rental sector. There is currently no cross-London approach to providing information for renters, helping inform them of or enforce their rights. We will shift the balance of power back in favour of renters to ensure their properties are fit for human habitation, and improve both the stringency of regulations and how they are enforced.

We will:

- Create a dedicated team at City Hall to work with borough councils in regulating the private rental market across the capital, ensuring greater transparency, common standards, and better allocation of enforcement resources in tackling illegally inefficient rental homes.
- Create a centrally held and publicly accessible register of all licensed private landlords (including details of their properties) operating across the 32 boroughs, to support borough councils in their regulation and enforcement activities, and to enable private renters to have access to information about the ownership of a property and its compliance with all (mandatory and voluntary) regulations.
- Push national Government to end "No Fault Evictions" (via use of Section 21), so renters can ask for the improvements to their properties they are legally and morally entitled to without fear of eviction.
- Pending the above, work with borough councils to establish mediation facilities that can be used by tenants and landlords to settle disputes and reduce the use of no-fault evictions.

Support for shared-ownership leaseholders

Many shared-ownership leaseholders are de facto renters, in that they only own a small proportion of the property in which they live, and pay rent on a much large proportion. However, they are doubly hit by virtue of also being responsible for infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.

They need specific support, tailored to their situation, to ensure that their homes are upgraded to clean, green standards, without incurring acute and unmanageable costs. This is the same as our stance on ending the cladding scandal, where leaseholders (shared owners and owners) who brought properties in good faith are now being asked to bear the costs of renovation.

We will:

- Use the Mayor's leverage in control of the substantial London housing budget to implement a policy of no-longer working with developers who refuse to help leaseholders (of either category) living in properties in their buildings and ensure that they are maintained to an acceptable green standard on the energy efficiency scale.

Building new homes to clean, green standards

As well as supporting current residents to keep them out of fuel poverty, we will be proactive in ensuring all new properties, be they private or social housing, are built to an acceptable energy efficient standard.

- Our policy on new homes includes new builds, refurbishments of existing housing stock (especially long-term empty homes), and repurposing of other sites (such as empty offices). All of these will be done to be done to modern energy efficiency standards.
- Our "Green Roofs" policy will also see all new housing and commercial properties with suitable roofs required to incorporate solar panels, greenery, or other features into their design. This will help to offset pollution, including that caused by construction) and provide on-going cheaper, greener energy for Londoners.

National policy on housing and energy

As the executive head of the Greater London Authority and elected representative of over 8 million Londoners, the Mayor has significant power to lobby the Government at Westminster. As Mayor, Luisa will work with Government to enact national changes to end fuel poverty, reduce energy costs, and reduce emissions from buildings, in line with the Liberal Democrats' national policy. These changes should mean that no private renter is forced into living in a property that is expensive to heat or energy inefficient.

These include:

- Providing free retrofits for low-income households (specifically those living in environmentally substandard houses), piloting a new subsidised Energy-Saving Homes scheme, graduating Stamp Duty Land Tax by the energy rating of the property and reducing VAT on home insulation. This would see all low-income homes insulated by 2025.
- Empower councils to develop community energy-saving projects, including delivering housing energy efficiency improvements street by street, which cuts costs.

- Require all new homes and non-domestic buildings to be built to a zero-carbon standard (where as much energy is generated on-site, through renewable sources, as is used), by a fixed deadline, later to rise to a more ambitious ('Passivhaus') standard.
- Increase minimum energy efficiency standards for privately rented properties and remove the cost cap on improvements.
- Adopt a Zero-Carbon Heat Strategy, including reforming the Renewable Heat Incentive, requiring the phased installation of heat pumps in homes and businesses off the gas grid, and piloting projects to determine the best future mix of zero-carbon heating solutions.