

1652 Student Housing Co-Ops

Passed 22 January 2015

Proposer: Helen Mallett (Food Co-Op)

Seconder: Chris Jarvis (Campaigns & Democracy Officer)

Union notes:

- 1) When the coalition came to power, tuition fees were trebled to £9000 per year.
- 2) In recent times, maintenance grants have been rising below inflation.
- 3) The cost of accommodation at UEA rose by 4.2% in for 2014/15 entry.
- 4) Student housing is notorious for being riddled with problems and often regarded as being of substantially lower quality than the rest of the housing sector. This has been borne out in evidence produced by NUS in the 'Homes Fit for Study Report.'
- 5) One of UUEAS's priority campaigns in 2014/15, cost of living, has a key focus on student housing, looking to tackle problems both in University owned halls of residence, and properties in the private sector.
- 6) Student housing co-operatives provide an alternative model for student housing.
- 7) Housing co-operatives are typically substantially cheaper than other rented accommodation, as there's no-one seeking to make profit.
- 8) Housing co-operatives are student-owned and put students in control of their living situations. We are our own landlords, put the rent up when we want to, and can make alterations to the house including painting walls, and property maintenance.
- 9) Housing co-operatives help students to develop useful skills in financial management, democracy, publicity and hands on skills such as property maintenance, gardening, etc.
- 10) Student housing co-operatives have recently been successfully set up in Birmingham and in Edinburgh, and the trend is expanding nationwide through the Students for Co-operation network.
- 11) The existing reserves policy states that 'in principle we should be seeking to invest the Unions reserves in students now' and the reserves should be spent on 'policies that have been endorsed or passed by Council that require extra capital funding.' (24/10/13 1395 Union reserves policy amended).

Union Believes:

- 1) UEA management's approach to university accommodation fees is based on maximising profit and takes little consideration of students' ability to pay.
- 2) Rent in the private sector is going up, and students are increasingly forced into inadequate accommodation that is poorly insulated, in the control of rogue landlords or unsafe.

- 3) Students shouldn't be forced to pay excessive and unaffordable rents, by the private rental sector or by the university.
- 4) Students shouldn't have to live in unsatisfactory housing.
- 5) Students are entirely capable of running and maintaining their own collective residences in the form of housing co-operatives. This is beneficial for themselves, for their finances and for their successors.
- 6) That supporting a student-owned housing co-operative fulfils UUEAS's values of sustainability, collectivism, fun and empowerment, and UUEAS's purpose – to enrich the life of students.

Union resolves:

- 1) To investigate the feasibility of combining capital expenditure from the reserves with funding from external partners to establish a student run housing co-operative in Norwich.
- 2) To report back to the first Council of the next academic year on what progress has been made.