

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Housing Committee

Does this report require to be approved? Yes No

Ref SL/MK

Date 07/05/25

Housing Allocations Policy

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of council's housing allocation policy monitoring and ongoing review processes, which ensures the policy continues to meet local needs, whilst aligning with relevant legislation and good practice.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Housing Committee:

- 1) Acknowledge the processes in place for the ongoing review and monitoring of the allocation policy.
- 2) Acknowledge that the policy has undergone five reviews since implementation in response to changes in legislation, practice and housing need, ensuring the policy remains fit for purpose, fair and transparent.
- 3) Recognise the commitment to the ongoing review of the policy.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities
Ambition statement	(1) Ensure a housing mix that supports social inclusion and economic growth
Programme of Work	Statutory / corporate / service requirement

1. Background

- 1.1 On 23 March 2009 Housing Services implemented the current housing allocation policy and began allocating council vacant homes according to the provisions of the new policy, through the Common Housing Register (CHR). The policy gives priority to those in most housing need whilst still recognising the aspirations of current tenants wishing to move to another house or area.
- 1.2 The current policy was developed following an independent evaluation of the previous policy, in which a number of recommendations and changes were highlighted. An extensive consultation programme was undertaken, in which a Member/Officer working group considered the viewpoints of more than 900 stakeholders, who provided

responses via a range of different methods. A modelling exercise of the 'then' new allocation policy was also conducted in two high demand letting areas in order to demonstrate the impact of the new policy and working practices, prior to any recommendations being made to implement changes.

- 1.3 In June 2008 the council approved the new housing allocation policy and made provision for a review of the policy to establish how it was operating in practice after 6 months. Thereafter, a commitment to continually review the policy to ensure we continue to meet the needs of our residents and respond to any changing legislative requirements.
- 1.4 A full suite of performance information along with a comprehensive and robust audit process to review and provide assurance on the implementation of the allocation policy across the housing localities was implemented and remains established.
- 1.5 It was also agreed that as part of the continual review of the allocation policy that consultation with all interested stakeholders would continue to be carried out and responses evaluated before any decisions are taken to change future policy.
- 1.6 As at 22 April 2025 there are currently 14,935 applicants on the waiting list who have requested housing with North Lanarkshire Council.
- 1.7 There are 19 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in North Lanarkshire who have 10,601 social rented homes, 8 of which operate the Common Housing Register (comprising 8,338 homes) and who have adopted the council's housing allocation policy or pointing framework. The council has 36,575 social rented homes. This means that 95% of all social rented housing in North Lanarkshire is allocated in the same way.

2. Report

- 2.1 Since the policy began in March 2009 five policy reviews following extensive consultation exercises have been carried out:

Phase 1 (2010) – amendments to priority awarded to:

- Applicants subject to a protocol
- Separate parents
- Sharing bedrooms in respect of children of opposite sex
- Applicants over 60 years for amenity housing

Phase 2 (2012) – amendments to priority awarded to:

- Persons leaving the armed forces
- Households who have a confirmed date of losing accommodation in 2 months
- Prospective foster carers
- Overcrowding and underoccupancy
- Properties deemed particularly suitable for medical factors

Phase 3 (2012) – amendments/consultation due to welfare reform:

- House size eligibility rules for single parents or couples with two children of the opposite sex
- Measures to mitigate impact of welfare reform

Phase 4 (2018) – amendments/consultation for changes to older people's housing:

- Re-designation of council sheltered housing and corresponding categories need to make best use of available older people's housing in meeting needs

Phase 5 (2022) – amendments/consultation due to:

- Under occupation in support of the Incentive to Downsize project
- How we prioritise veterans and people leaving the armed force in support of the Armed Forces Covenant and Armed Forces Bill
- Owner occupation discretionary power, introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Reasonable preference groups, introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 – setting out three categories of applicants that should be given reasonable preference in an allocation policy (homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness and who have unmet needs; people who are living in unsatisfactory living conditions and who have unmet needs – those living in a property which does not meet the tolerable standard, overcrowding; social housing tenants who are under-occupying)
- How we apply priority for people at risk of losing accommodation

2.2 As part of the ongoing reviews, extensive consultation is undertaken, which seeks the views of all interested stakeholders in relation to the operation of the policy. This is achieved through using a variety of methods, including but not limited to:

- Postal and online questionnaires to stakeholders, including Elected Members, Chief Officers, North Lanarkshire Federation, tenants and residents groups, partner RSLs, Shelter, CAB, the Scottish Housing Regulator and equalities groups
- Focus groups
- Elected Member briefing sessions
- Council communication channels
- Practitioner meetings with council and RSL employees currently operating the existing policy

2.3 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 also introduced a requirement to consult with stakeholders, including tenants and applicants and any other persons or organisations the landlord thinks fit to include when any change to policy is being considered. For landlords who are part of a Common Housing Register (CHR), a reasonable sample of the waiting list can be used for the consultation.

2.4 All reviews carried out to date have been instigated due to legislation changes and/or in response to reflecting housing need in North Lanarkshire.

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

2.5 The legislative and regulatory framework for the allocation of social rented sector homes has evolved over time, including through the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

2.6 Allocation policies also need to comply with the homelessness rules set out in Part II of the 1987 Act (as amended by the 2001 Act and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 ("the 2003 Act")).

2.7 There is also a range of statutory guidance which has informed the current allocation policy. This includes:

- The Legal Framework for Social Housing Allocations, Statutory Guidance for Social Landlords (Scottish Government, 2014)
- The Scottish Government's Code of Guidance on Homelessness
- Minimum Period for Applications to remain in force – Suspensions Under Section 20B of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 – Statutory Guidance (Scottish Government, 2018)
- The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty
- The Human Rights Act 1998

2.8 In terms of regulatory framework the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) was introduced under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.9 The SHR monitors, assesses, benchmarks and reports on social landlords' performance and requires social landlords to collect and provide key information on their performance in achieving the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) outcomes and standards in an Annual Return. There are several SSHC outcomes that are of direct relevance to allocation policy and practice on which the council reports on to evidence:

- Tenants' individual needs are recognised, are treated with respect and receive fair access to housing and housing services
- Good communication and involvement in decisions – including allocation policy changes
- High quality housing options – applicants looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices about the options available to them
- Homelessness prevention – people at risk of losing their home get advice on preventing homelessness
- Tenancy sustainment – social landlords ensure that tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home and ensure suitable support is available
- Homelessness – people who experience homelessness receive prompt and easy access to help and advice, are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary accommodation if needed and offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.

2.10 The council's allocation policy is compliant with all of the aforementioned legislation, statutory guidance and the SSHC outcomes.

Future Legislative Impacts, Monitoring and Review

2.11 It is highly likely that the new Housing Bill will necessitate consideration of the current allocation policy in respect of homelessness prevention. The Bill is currently making its way through the Parliamentary stages and as this progresses the allocation policy will be considered in a similar way to previous allocation policy phase reviews to identify options/potential changes and consult accordingly.

2.12 Council officers are engaged in the Scottish Housing Network national good practice Allocation Policy Forum which brings together allocation policy practitioners to share best practice and developments in allocation policy approaches. This helps ensure alongside legislative/regulatory developments that the approach remains forward-looking, taking a proactive approach to responding to local housing needs.

2.13 A robust system is in place to monitor the operation of the allocation policy. This

involves tenants, with a performance subgroup established as part of the tenant participation spectrum of activity. Allocation related performance data is used both internally to monitor how the system is working in addition to being included in the information contained within the annual report on the Charter for the SHR. Regular benchmarking also takes place with access to comparison tools and other social landlord data which enables council officers to undertake analysis.

3. Measures of success

- 3.1 The continued application of a council housing allocation policy that complies with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, whilst also reflecting the circumstances and housing needs of communities across the North Lanarkshire area.

4. Supporting documentation

N/A



Stephen Llewellyn
Chief Officer (Housing)

5. Impacts

5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
5.2 Financial impact Does the report contain any financial impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?
5.3 HR policy impact Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?
5.4 Legal impact Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? Legislative/statutory requirements have impacted on previous allocation policy reviews and are likely to impact in the future.
5.5 Data protection impact Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
5.6 Technology / Digital impact

Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)?

Yes No

5.7 Environmental / Carbon impact

Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.8 Communications impact

Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.9 Risk impact

Is there a risk impact?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed?

5.10 Armed Forces Covenant Duty

Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

The allocation policy recognises the needs of the Armed Forces community households and makes provision for this in the policy framework.

5.11 Children's rights and wellbeing impact

Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?

Yes

No