



Author: Lynda Powell
Committee: Full Council
Status: Public
Agenda Item: FC 24-25.82 Housing Allocation
Date: 21st November 2024

- 1 **Purpose.** To consider Lanteglos-by-Fowey’s proposal for managing the housing allocation in Cornwall and their request for support in persuading Cornwall Council to adopt this policy (see appendix A).
- 2 **Decision Required.** Councillors are asked to consider the options at 5. These include asking the Clerk to write to Cornwall Council in support of Lanteglos-by-Fowey’s housing allocation proposal or convening a task and finish group to examine the issue in more detail and make a recommendation to Full Council.

3 Background

- 3.1 Cornwall Council has a range of statutory duties around providing people in housing need with homes.
- 3.2 Homechoice is Cornwall Council’s and their housing partners method for allocating housing to those in housing need. The Homechoice scheme sets out the rules about how vacant properties (within Cornwall Council’s control through nomination rights or ownership or managed through the scheme with the consent of the provider landlords) are matched to people in housing need.
- 3.3 In preparing an allocation policy, housing authorities must ensure that priority for social housing goes to those in the greatest need. Cornwall Homechoice uses a banding criteria to assess applicants.

Band A	Reasonable Preference and Additional Preference
Emergency Relocation	Where ‘substantial’ evidence from a statutory organisation, such as the police, is provided which concludes that risk to life or serious harm could result if an immediate move is not obtained (includes victims of domestic abuse, racial harassment, and

	witness intimidation) demonstrate that suitable temporary accommodation through the statutory homeless duties would not be an option
Welfare	Applicants awarded an 'urgent' priority by Housing Needs Officers
Adapted / Accessible Property	The applicant occupies a Council or Registered Provider property within the Cornwall Homechoice area that matches Adapted / Accessible Property Group 1 or 2 and no household member requires the adaptation
Care Leavers	For those care leavers for who social housing represents the most appropriate housing option when they are ready for independent living
Hospital / Care Home / Nursing Home Discharge	For those who have no suitable home to return to when discharged
Under-Occupation	Tenants in Cornwall who are under-occupying a Council or Partner Landlord property and who want to move to a smaller property
Band B	Reasonable Preference and Additional Preference
Welfare	Applicants awarded a 'high' priority by Housing Needs Officers
Overcrowding	Applicant lacks 2 or more bedrooms in their current home, or applicant is sharing with another household and lacks 1 bedroom - unless evidence exists that the overcrowding is deliberate. (This excludes applicants in temporary accommodation)
Disrepair	Private sector tenants or residents that have been assessed as having Category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System that involve an imminent risk of harm to the occupants and the landlord is unable to remedy the defects to the property within a reasonable period of time as specified by the Private Sector Housing Team Social housing tenants experiencing serious damp and mould that involves an imminent risk of harm to the occupants and cannot be rectified by their landlord within a reasonable period of time
Move-on	The applicant is formally accepted under the move-on scheme, including move-on from supported housing and refuges.
Emergency Decant & Redevelopment Programme	This can include properties handed back to the landlord or those where there are serious damp and mould problems. Will also include those homes where the demolition, refurbishment, or sale of their home has been approved and the tenant is required to move within the next six months
Statutory Homelessness	Applicants to whom Cornwall Council has accepted a full housing duty under the current Homelessness legislation. Households to whom the Council previously owed a main duty but who have voluntarily agreed to the duty being ended by the provision of private rented accommodation or accommodation with family and friends for a period of 1 year from this decision.
Band C	Reasonable Preference
Prevention of Homelessness	Applicants who can demonstrate they are homeless or threatened with homelessness but not owed a main housing

	duty by Cornwall Council. Households to whom the Council previously owed a prevention or relief duty main duty but who have voluntarily agreed to the duty being ended by the provision of private rented accommodation or accommodation with family and friends for a period of 1 year from this decision.
Welfare	Applicants awarded a 'medium' priority by Housing Needs Officers
Overcrowding	Applicants who lack one bedroom in their current home unless evidence exists that the overcrowding is deliberate. (This excludes applicants in temporary accommodation).
Access to Support / Facilities	The applicant, or a member of their household, needs to move to a particular 'locality' within Cornwall, to give or receive on-going support from 'close' family members, or to access specialist medical facilities
Access to Work / Training including key workers	he applicant, or a member of their household, needs to move closer to their place of work/training (of a non-casual nature) within Cornwall People who need to move into the district or to a particular locality in the district of the authority, needs to move to take up a job or live closer to employment or training (including apprenticeships) where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)
Band D	Discontinued – no reasonable preference
Intermediate Housing (former Band E)	No Reasonable Preference
All other applicants	Households who have no reasonable preference.
Local Cornwall Criteria All applicants	Within each band listed above, applicants with a qualifying local connection to Cornwall will be considered before applicants who do not have a local connection to Cornwall

3.4 A local connection to Cornwall is defined as :

- The applicant lives in Cornwall and has done continuously for the last three years, and that residence was of their choice. (NB residence in a hospital or prison does not form a local connection by residence)
- The applicant is employed in permanent employment in Cornwall (permanent employment is regarded as 16 hours or more per week for a continuous period of three years. (NB This must be their actual place of work, not where their head office is situated)
- Criteria within a s106 allows, and the applicant has close family (normally mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter) that have resided in the area for a minimum of the past five years and the applicant has a need to give or receive support for the foreseeable future/on an ongoing basis
- The applicant meets the criteria under an additional preference category, for example, fleeing domestic abuse, current or former armed service personnel, right to move and witness relocation

- Exceptional circumstances – where there is an exceptional need to move to Cornwall. Examples include but not limited to: those needing to move closer to specialist medical/support facilities; applicants accepted as homeless and owed a full housing duty by Cornwall Council; homeowners requiring adaptations; and Cornwall care leavers living outside of the County.

3.5 Cornwall Homechoice also uses preference labels where their standard policy approach may not result in the right applicants being matched with the right property or it is considered that a property should be allocated to an applicant that meets specific criteria or has a particular need.

Details of these preference labels including the ‘Parish Preference Label’ can be found in appendix 2 of the [Cornwall Homechoice Scheme](#).

4 Lanteglos-by-Fowey Proposal

4.1 The Cornwall Homechoice ‘Parish Preference Label’ is only applicable where there are fewer than 50 social housing dwellings. Lanteglos-by-Fowey, like Looe has more than 50 social houses so this preference label is not applied.

4.2 Applicants for properties in band A-C will have their qualifying local connection considered when applying for property but applicants in lower bands will not.

4.3 Lanteglos-by-Fowey are asking for a change in the allocation policy:

“Housing allocation should be on the basis of alternately letting to people in desperate need (with or without parish connections) followed by letting to bidders from the parish whatever their banding criteria. This is recognition that, at present, demand outstrips supply but maintaining our local communities in Cornwall should be a priority. Once publicly-owned housing for rent meets demand, the need for this measure will disappear.”

5 Other Housing Issues

5.1 **Mutual Exchanges.** Social housing tenants generally have the right to apply to swap their home. This can lead to housing being allocated to people who do not have a local connection.

5.2 **Parish Preference Label.** Our Cornwall Councillors have reported that in parishes with less than 50 social homes the Parish Preference Label is not always being applied.

6 Options

- a) Councillors may wish the Clerk to write in support of Lanteglos-by-Fowey’s proposal.
- b) Councillors may wish to form a task and finish group to examine the issue in more detail and make a recommendation to Full Council.

Cornwall housing allocations – do these shocking figures match those in your parish?

In the two years to March 31 2024, ten council-owned properties in Lanteglos parish became vacant. Out of those ten, one went to a person/family with a local connection. Currently, Cornwall Council is paying out many millions of pounds to accommodate homeless families. Lanteglos-by-Fowey Parish Council (LBFPC) thinks these statistics are linked.

Lanteglos by Fowey is a rural Parish but with more than 50 homes for social rent. This means the 'Parish Preference Label,' as defined in the Cornwall Housing Allocation Policy is not applicable. This situation is unfair for rural parishes such as ours as it is impossible for anyone with a local connection on 'Band D or E' priority to obtain social housing locally.

For the past three years, LBFPC has urged a change in Cornwall's housing policy – that in a spirit of fairness and recognising the need to keep communities together during an avoidable housing crisis, allocations to Cornwall Council-owned properties should alternate between those in highest need (for example homeless people) and people from the parish who have a local connection whatever their banding.

Cornwall Council has contemptuously dismissed this suggestion. LBFPC believes the reason is that the need to reduce the millions spent on homeless families trumps the needs of people from the parish.

LBFPC believes this is grossly unfair and that there is a danger of homeless people being blamed for this situation. To be clear, LBFPC stands in solidarity with homeless people. They, together with people in need from the parishes, are victims of a crisis which is decades in the making. Cornwall Council could, at a stroke, make fundamental changes to its housing policy which would bring immediate relief. Lanteglos-by-Fowey Parish Council has drawn up a housing manifesto which we recommend to you and which is appended to this letter for your information.

But for now, LBFPC is asking for your support in persuading Cornwall Council to adopt this policy in relation to housing allocation:

“Housing allocation should be on the basis of alternately letting to people in desperate need (with or without parish connections) followed by letting to bidders from the parish whatever their banding criteria. This is recognition that, at present, demand outstrips supply but maintaining our local communities in Cornwall should be a priority. Once publicly-owned housing for rent meets demand, the need for this measure will disappear.”

Cornwall Council has shown it is immune to a call for change from one small, rural parish. It will not find it so easy to do so if many town and parish councils, from Bude to Land's End, join us. Please consider this matter at your next meeting.