

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 JULY 2025</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>BRIDGEND SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, HOUSING AND CHANGE</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>RYAN JONES STRATEGIC HOUSING COMMISSIONING MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>This report seeks approval to begin a period of public consultation with a view to adopting a new Social Housing Allocation Policy. There is no other effect upon policy framework and procedure rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>Bridgend County Borough Councils (BCBC) current Social Housing Allocation Policy was implemented in 2017. Since this time there have been several changes which have impacted the Policy and the pressure on social housing demands.</b></p> <p><b>A review of the current Policy has taken place, following which a new draft Social Housing Allocation Policy has been developed. This report summarises the findings from the review, the proposed changes and seeks approval from Cabinet to begin a period of public consultation on the new Policy.</b></p>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to go out to public consultation on a revised Social Housing Allocation Policy.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 In December 2023 Cabinet approved a Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2026 and associated Action Plan. A key commitment within the Action Plan is to review, appraise and amend if required the Council's Social Housing Allocation Policy (SHAP), taking into consideration the views of key stakeholders.

- 2.2 The Council manages applications to and allocations from the Common Housing Register. Bridgend's SHAP sets out how the Council and its Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners manage applications and allocate the majority of social housing within the county borough through the Common Housing Register. The RSLs that operate within Bridgend are Beacon, Hafod, Linc-Cymru, Trivallis, United Welsh, Valleys to Coast (V2C), Wales & West.
- 2.3 Bridgend's current SHAP was implemented in 2017. Since this time there have been several changes which have impacted the Policy, including legislation changes and increased pressure on the social housing and homelessness systems, which have been highlighted in several reports to Cabinet in recent years.
- 2.4 To support this work an independent consultant, HICO was commissioned to undertake a review of the current SHAP. This offered impartiality in the review process.
- 2.5 HICO's brief was to review and analyse data on current allocations, waiting times, application numbers and outcomes. They were also asked to consider the strategic context in relation to relevant legislation and guidance, the Council's responsibilities and to engage with RSL partners as well as wider agencies and stakeholders.
- 2.6 HICO have undertaken a desktop review of current arrangements, data analysis and review of practice and policy in Wales, seeking out best practice examples elsewhere. They also undertook interviews with stakeholders, including one to one and group interviews with internal and external stakeholders. An online survey was conducted with people who were currently or had recently been on the Council's Common Housing Register. The list of stakeholders engaged with as part of the review is below:

#### **BCBC**

- BCBC Housing Department
- BCBC Social Services
- BCBC Cabinet Members

#### **RSLs**

- Valleys to Coast (V2C)
- Wales & West Housing Association
- Linc Cymru
- Hafod
- Coastal Housing Association (now known as Beacon Cymru Group)

#### **Housing Support Providers**

- The Wallich
- Adferiad
- Shelter Cymru
- Goleudy
- Pobl
- Llamau

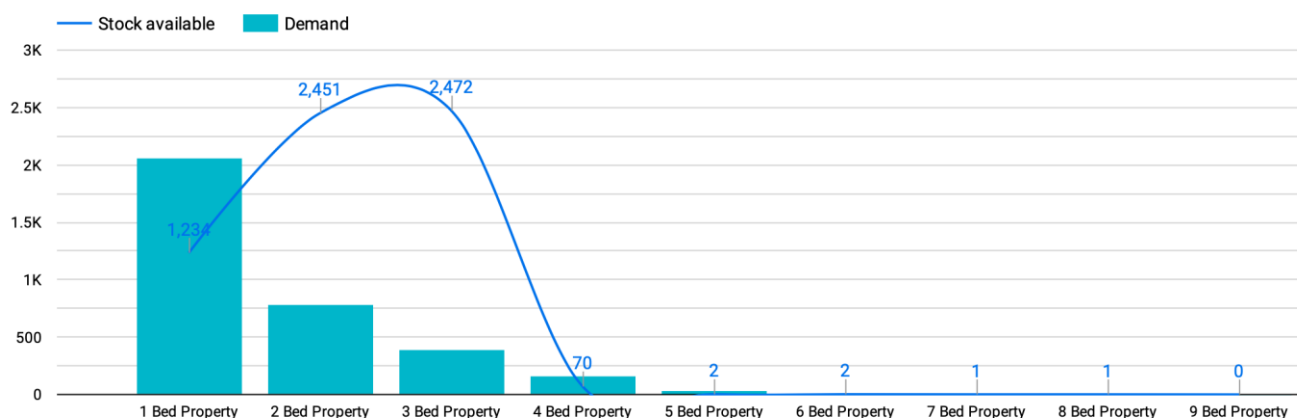
## Service Users

- Individuals requiring adapted accommodation
- Those in supported housing
- General applicants to the Common Housing Register

### 3. Current situation/ proposal

3.1 A review of the current SHAP has concluded. The key findings from the review are highlighted below:

- There are currently 3,300 households on the Common Housing Register. There is a disparity between demand and stock for all bedroom sizes. As can be seen in the chart below the disparity is significantly greater for 1-bedroom properties and 4-bedroom properties.



- Those waiting for 1 and 4 bedroom properties face the longest waits.
- There is a high demand for ground floor, accessible homes and also for larger homes, with stock of 5 to 8 bedrooms being almost non-existent.
- Stock shortages, particularly in more sought after areas such as Brackla and Porthcawl force applicants to be housed outside of their preferred area of choice.
- Due to the pressure on the register and those assessed as having an urgent need to move those in lower bands face prolonged delays. Demand is so much so that households in Band C, a band currently utilised for those in no housing need are not likely to receive an offer of accommodation.
- There is a need to combine a Rapid Rehousing approach into the Common Housing Register, to encourage prevention without incentivising homelessness.
- There are delays in moving individuals out of supported accommodation, resulting in bed blocking and inefficiencies within the system. This is the case for both care

leavers and individuals in wider supported accommodation services. Individuals with restricted areas of choice on their applications can exacerbate these delays.

- The current exclusions and arrears policy needs to be updated, including with consideration to a clear income and savings threshold to guide eligibility for social housing.

3.2 Following consideration of the review, including the key findings detailed above a new draft Social Housing Allocation Policy has been developed and attached at **Appendix 1**. This Policy has been written to comply with the legal requirements of the Housing Act 1996, Housing (Wales) Act 2014, and the Welsh Government's Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness.

3.3 In adopting a new Policy it should be noted that there is a significant shortage of available social housing relative to the demand. As such the Policy looks to prioritise housing for individuals who are in the greatest housing need. The Policy looks to adopt a balance of supporting sustainable communities and enabling individuals to express choice, whilst ensuring those in the most need are housed as quickly and as suitably as a possible, acknowledging significant constraints within the system.

3.4 Whilst the full draft Policy is attached at **Appendix 1** key proposed changes to the current SHAP are detailed below:

- To encourage best use of existing stock those willing to move on from high demand properties, including accessible homes, 1 bedroom property's and 4-bedroom property's will be added to the Priority Band.
- All households threatened with or experiencing homelessness, including those in temporary accommodation will be added to Band A. This will support homelessness prevention and through flow through temporary accommodation, whilst balancing the need of other households, not incentivising homelessness.
- Those in supported accommodation and care experienced children looking to move on from a care placement will be added to Band A. For these cases the Council will have the flexibility to make an offer of suitable accommodation in any within the borough. This will support through flow in supported accommodation, helping to ensure valuable resource is available for those in need.
- Where a care leaver in a care or supported accommodation placement requires accommodation, which would result in the alleviation of wider intensive agency input they will be added to the Priority Band. This will support the Council's Corporate Parenting agenda and ensure best use of resources.
- The terms of exclusion from the Common Housing Register are updated to ensure applicants are not unfairly and disproportionately penalised for past behaviour. Exclusion on the basis of former tenant debt / rent arrears will move to time based approach e.g. 8 weeks, rather than an arbitrary sum. This will enable different circumstances to be taken into account and ensure this area of the Policy is not adversely impacted by inflation.

- To ensure social housing is there for those in the most need an income and asset threshold criteria has been added meaning that single applicants or couples with a gross income exceeding £35,000 or savings / assets over £30,000 or families with a gross income exceeding £60,000 or savings / assets over £30,000 will not be eligible to join the Common Housing Register. Similarly, those who own a share of 50% or more in a residential property will not be eligible. Discretion may be applied in cases where strict adherence to these thresholds would unjustly disadvantage individuals.
- To ensure that social housing is exclusively for those in housing need and in acknowledgment that those added to the register with no housing need will likely never receive an offer of accommodation Band C to be removed.

3.5 As highlighted in Section 2 of this report a substantial amount of engagement with key stakeholders has already taken place in undertaking a review of the current Policy. Discussions have been held with many of the key stakeholders when formulating the new draft SHAP. It is now proposed that a wider, public consultation on the draft Strategy is carried out over a period of 12 weeks to ensure that members of the public, are able to formally put forward their views as well as any stakeholders or organisations who have an interest in the issues and proposed Policy.

3.6 As the SHAP is a strategic document, the Council is required to undertake a formal public consultation for a period of 12 weeks, prior to adopting a new Policy. Cabinet is recommended to approve the formal consultation period on the new draft SHAP.

3.7 At the end of the consultation period, responses will be taken into account and necessary amendments made, with a final SHAP being presented to a future meeting of Cabinet for approval.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 The delivery of and best use of social housing contributes to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales – the provision and availability of suitable housing is key to supporting a prosperous Wales by reducing cost to the public purse. Individuals in suitable housing are more likely to achieve wider prosperity through other areas in their lives.
- A resilient Wales – our draft SHAP aims to ensure best use of a limited resource increasing the resilience of both individuals supported and the general structures in place to support the goal of achieving a position where homelessness in Wales is rare, brief and non-recurrent and individuals are accommodated in good quality and suitable accommodation.

- A Wales of cohesive communities – the draft SHAP looks to achieve cohesive communities through housing allocations which ensure those in most need are supported, whilst balancing the need of sustainable communities.
- A globally responsive Wales – suitable housing is an issue across the globe. The draft SHAP is a strategic document, which sets out the approach Bridgend will take to support Wales in its efforts around this agenda.

5.2 It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

## **6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

6.1 The provision of suitable housing supports the agenda around climate change and nature. The Council's SHAP will help to make best use of a valuable and limited resource. The Common Housing Register helps to inform and shape the development of new housing schemes which will be developed in line with Welsh Government planning and standards requirements, which support moves to tackle climate change.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 The provision of suitable housing is a key element of the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent. The draft SHAP sets out ways in which care experienced children and care leavers will be supported to secure accommodation via the Common Housing Register, if this is deemed to be the most appropriate solution for the individual.

7.2 The new draft Policy looks to implement changes which will support the Council in its wider Corporate Parenting responsibilities, through supporting the flow and best use of resources in relation to available care and supported accommodation placements.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The cost of the public consultation and measures required to mobilise and implement a new SHAP will be met from existing budgets.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Consider the SHAP (**Appendix 1**);
- approve a 12 week public consultation on the revised SHAP (**Appendix 1**);
- note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet following the public consultation and seeking approval of the final SHAP prior to formal adoption.

## **Background documents**

Bridgend Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2026