

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>10 MARCH 2026</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>BRIDGEND SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY</b>
<b>Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR – FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION</b>  <b>CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>RYAN JONES</b> <b>STRATEGIC HOUSING COMMISSIONING MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>To seek approval to adopt the revised Bridgend Social Housing Allocation Policy which has been updated following a period of public consultation.</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval of the revised Social Housing Allocation Policy (SHAP) attached as **Appendix 1**.

## **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, Codi, Trivallis, United Welsh, Valleys to Coast (V2C), and 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.
- 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. 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.
- 2.5 HICO undertook 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.
- 2.6 Key findings from the review are detailed below:
- There are currently 3,500 households on the Common Housing Register – a huge increase in pre Covid 19 pandemic levels. There is a disparity between demand and stock for all bedroom sizes, but the disparity is significantly greater for 1-bedroom properties and 4-bedroom properties.
  - 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.
- 2.7 Following consideration of the review, including the key findings detailed above, a new draft SHAP was developed. The Policy was 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.

2.8 Key proposed changes in the draft 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 area 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 is to be removed.

2.9 On 22 July 2025 Cabinet approved a 12-week public consultation on the draft Social Housing Allocation Policy, which included the proposed changes set out at paragraph 2.8.

### 3. Current situation/ proposal

3.1 Following Cabinet approval a formal public consultation period on the draft SHAP was held between 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025 and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025. Links to the online consultation were shared widely with stakeholders and published on Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) website and social media channels.

3.2 145 individuals participated in the online survey. All participants were anonymous. Below is a summary of the responses.

Q1 22.2% agreed that the way priority is decided between the bands is fair and easy to understand. 15.3% were unsure and 62.5% did not agree.

Q2 48.3% answered yes when asked should any other groups or situations get higher priority than those listed. 24.5% were unsure and 27.3% felt no other groups or situations should get higher priority than listed.

Q3 When asked to explain answers to the above two questions further there was a wide range of responses. Responses included prioritisation for local residents, veterans in line with the Armed Forces Covenant, those who work, homeless persons, those fleeing domestic abuse, disabled households, families.

Q4 68.3% agreed that the rules for excluding people are fair. 15.9% were unsure and 15.9% answered no.

Q5 When asked to explain answers further there was a pattern of responses supporting consequences for things like rent arrears and anti-social behaviour. Others noted that individual circumstances should be considered before considering exclusion.

Q6 49% answered unsure when asked if the income and savings limits are set at the right level. 20% answered yes and 31% answered no.

Q7 When asked to explain answers again responses were varied. Some felt that both the proposed income and savings levels are too low, whilst others felt the proposed amounts are too high. Some commented that income thresholds should increase over time.

3.3 The draft SHAP was also presented to the Communities, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 September 2025 for comment and consideration. The Committee made the following recommendations:

- The Communities 'deep dive', consider potential ideas to address the shortfall in the supply of housing, and
- That the Strategy and Action Plans be updated setting out the steps being taken to urgently address this position.

3.4 The draft SHAP was also reviewed by legal counsel who provided an advice note on the Policy.

- 3.5 The Social Housing Allocation Policy at **Appendix 1** has been revised, taking into consideration the comments received during the consultation period. Key changes made to the draft version presented to Cabinet on 22 July 2025 are detailed below:
- Amendments have been made to the eligibility sections to reflect relevant legislation.
  - Households previously proposed to be excluded, including those with high levels of rent arrears, those with no housing need and those exceeding income or savings thresholds are to be added to the Common Housing Register. Band C is to be reinstated to accommodate such cases, with a reduced priority, as opposed to a complete exclusion.
  - To provide a rationale and consideration of wage growth over time the income thresholds have been amended to consider the average (median) gross weekly earnings for Bridgend, as indicated by the latest available Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).
- 3.6 Following revision the Policy at **Appendix 1** has been subject to a closed consultation period with RSL partners. This took place between 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2026. No further amendments are proposed following this exercise. Cabinet should however note that whilst currently V2C are the only RSL to allocate only 75% of their stock via the Common Housing Register, consideration will be given to increasing this. Should V2C agree to increase this percentage then this will be reflected and updated in the SHAP accordingly.
- 3.7 Cabinet are recommended to consider the Social Housing Allocation Policy at **Appendix 1** and approve the same. Subject to approval, there will be a period of mobilisation, which will include implementing changes to I.T software, updating BCBC's website and communication to key stakeholders. A Member Briefing Session will also be provided to update Members on key changes.

#### **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 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 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 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 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 SHAP 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 mobilisation and implementation for the new SHAP will be met from existing budgets.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Approve the Bridgend Social Housing Allocation Policy attached as **Appendix 1**;
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director – Finance and Transformation to make minor variations to the Policy to allow for any increase in the percentage of Valleys to Coast properties to be allocated via the Common Housing Register.

## **Background documents**

None