

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Director of Adult Social Care & Health Integration
Relevant Executive Member:	Executive Member for Adult Social Care
Submitted to:	Single Member Executive
Date:	9 June 2025
Title:	Letting Affordable Housing – Policy Update
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	A successful and ambitious town
Key decision:	Yes
Why:	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
Subject to call in?	Yes
Why:	Non-urgent report

Proposed decision(s)
That The Executive approve proposed changes to the Common Allocation Policy.

Executive summary
<p>This report is regarding the Common Allocation Policy (CAP) for social Housing across the Tees Valley.</p> <p>Each Local Authority is required by the Housing Act 1996 to operate a Housing Register. Middlesbrough operates a joint register with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Redcar & Cleveland Council. Two Registered Providers, Beyond Housing and North Star are also part of this partnership referred to throughout as the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership (TVLP).</p> <p>The lettings platform used is called Tees Valley Home Finder (TVHF). Applicants are placed in a banding to reflect their circumstances and need, and “bid” for properties which are added to the system.</p> <p>Due to the demand for social housing (almost 3000 live applications for Middlesbrough) along with the low weekly number of properties advertised (average of 14 per week in</p>

2024/25) the partners agreed that it was time to review the allocation policy to ensure it is best supporting those in the greatest needs, reflects customer feedback and remains relevant and compliant with regards to national policy.

Representatives from the partnership met and reviewed the policy in detail and drafted a new Common Allocation Policy (CAP) (Appendix 1).

Consultation was held on the proposed policy in October and November 2024 and the proposed changes were well received.

At the point of implementation of the new CAP, live applications in a priority banding will remain in their current priority band, meaning there will be no detrimental impact on the applicant. Applicants who will benefit from the proposed changes are currently being identified so the necessary amendments can be made to their application. All applications will then be subject to the new CAP moving forward, whether it be a new application or a change of circumstances.

It is recommended that the changes to the CAP be approved so that implementation can begin right away. The only alternative would be to continue in using the current policy which was written in 2019 and is no longer fit for purpose, hence the suggested changes.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give context and outline to the proposed changes to the Common Allocation Policy (CAP) **(Appendix 1)**
- 1.2 The proposal supports the ambitions of 'A Successful and Ambitious Town' by ensuring allocation of social housing meets the demand of those in housing need.
- 1.3 Due to rising demand for social/affordable rented housing, it is essential that the Common Allocation Policy (CAP) remains relevant, adheres to national policy and, vitally, meets our local housing needs. The Partnership has recently undertaken a review of the current CAP to ensure we have a policy that is fair, clear and helps those who need social/affordable housing most. The review was informed by consultation with applicants registered on Tees Valley Home Finder, key partners and stakeholders.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive approves proposed changes to the Common Allocation Policy.
- 2.2 The Executive are asked to note the recent consultation exercise which was undertaken to inform an updated Tees Valley Common Allocation Policy (CAP) and approve the proposed new Common Allocation Policy. **(Appendix 2)**

3 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 By approving the amendments this will:

- Help the Council to ensure consistency of the policy across the sub region.
- Give clarity and transparency for all scheme applicants across the partnership.
- Ensure that the policy is aligned with statute which has emerged since the previous policy was implemented.
- Ensure that the policy is reflective of stakeholder feedback provided during the consultation process.

3.2 Although Middlesbrough Council is not a stock holding authority, we are required to operate a housing register along with an allocation Policy. In partnership with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Beyond Housing and North Star (known as the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership (TVLP)) we operate a Common Allocation Policy (CAP). The Partnership is committed to working collaboratively to ensure a fair and transparent CAP. The recent CAP review was undertaken to ensure that the housing needs of residents across the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees are met.

4. Background and relevant information

Background

4.1 As noted previously Middlesbrough Council is a member of the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership and collectively we operate a CAP, housing register and digital lettings platform, [Tees Valley Home Finder](#). Tees Valley Home Finder is an online web portal allowing those seeking accommodation in the partner boroughs to register and 'bid' for housing. The two Registered Provider Partnership members, Beyond and North Star advertise/let their properties through this route. A further 12 Registered Providers are signatories to a Nomination Agreement. These Registered Providers advertise / let a minimum of 50% of their vacant rented properties via the Tees Valley Homefinder platform.

4.2 There is high demand for social/affordable rented housing and availability does not match this demand (as summarised below). This was the reason a review of the policy has been undertaken, with the aim of maximising the council's ability to best address our local and prioritised housing need:

4.3 Housing Register:

The number of applicants on the Housing register for Middlesbrough at the end of Q4 2024/25 was 2878.

4.4 Average Number of properties advertised as available for letting:

Whilst the weekly number of properties does fluctuate, between April 2024 to the end of Qu. 4 2024-25 the average number of advertised properties per week was 14 in Middlesbrough.

Review & Consultation

5.0 In addition to the issues of demand mentioned above, the policy review took place to also ensure that the Council is in a good position to assist those in the greatest housing need and reflect on customer feedback. It also gave the opportunity to address another driver for the review of the CAP was to ensure compliance regarding changes in national policy, including the Government's commitment to ensure appropriate priority and support is given to our Armed Forces Communities including veterans, those who are young care leavers and those who have experienced domestic abuse.

5.1 Representatives of the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership undertook a review and identified several potential changes which the consultation exercise subsequently sought views on. Pages 17-30 of the CAP Consultation Report (**Appendix 2**) detail the consultation questions asked, and sought views on 12 proposed changes which are summarised below. Please note that the page number in brackets at the end of the summary is where you can find more detail of this in the CAP (**Appendix 1**).

5.2 Changes proposed are as follows:

- Local connection: Due to increased demand this change means that anyone wishing to join the register must have a local connection to at least one of the three partner areas (Page 9).
- Serious cases of anti-social behaviour: Due to the significant impact this has on communities, there is to be an increase in the length of exclusion from the Housing Register from 12 to 36 months for households containing perpetrators of unacceptable behaviour (Page 11).
- Regular review of applicants with a banding priority: With the potential to remove a priority banding if suitable properties have been advertised and the applicant has failed to place a bid over a six-month period (page 21).
- Loss of home due to demolition: Introduction of a new *Band 1 plus* to be given to those on the Housing Register who are losing their home due to demolition (page 16).
- HM Armed Forces Community: Introduction of a new *Band 1 plus* for those leaving the armed forces communities with an urgent need for housing, as assessed by Local Authority Homelessness Teams (page 17).
- Homeless households: To be placed in *Band 1* when applicants are owned a main duty and are resident in temporary accommodation, *Band 2* when

applicants are owed a prevention or relief duty or *Band 3* where after 56 days, the applicant has been determined as intentionally homeless or not in priority need. This will be determined by the local authority Homelessness Teams to ensure compliance with homelessness legislation (pages 17, 19 & 21).

- Care Leavers: Young people who leaving the care of the Local Authority and have been assessed as ready for independent living will be awarded a *Band 1* (Page 17).
- The introduction of a new Emergency Medical: For those applicants with an emergency housing need which is being exacerbated by their current housing situation (for example people ready for discharge from hospital where their current housing is unsuitable / cannot be made suitable through property adaptations), to be awarded a *Band 1*. Urgent Medical need will remain band 2 (Page 17).
- Child Protection: A new category will be introduced where there is evidence of a serious threat to the well-being of a child and their accommodation is a significant contributory factor in the risk will be awarded *Band 1* (Page 18).
- Adoptive parents or prospective adoptive parents/foster carers currently living in unsuitable accommodation: This category is to be expanded to include 'specialist guardianship', to be awarded a *Band 2* (Page 19).
- Overcrowding: A new category of 'acute overcrowding' to be introduced in instances where an applicant is severely overcrowded requiring 2 or more additional bedrooms, a *Band 2* will be awarded. Overcrowding by 1 bedroom will continue to secure a Band 3 (Page 19).
- Senior Management Discretion: Whilst the majority of allocations will be made in accordance with the CAP scheme banding rules, there will be *exceptional* circumstances which does not fit into the banding categories (Page 22).

5.3 The consultation exercise for the proposed changes ran for 6 weeks between 07.10.24 to 18.11.24 with the consultation exercise promoted by:

- Direct contact with all applicants with a live Tees Valley Home Finder application at any point during the time the consultation was undertaken. In total 8409 contacts were made via email and/or letter across the 3 local authority areas.
- Direct contact with a range of partner organisations including VCSE sector partners, 15 Registered Providers, local elected members in the three local authorities, local MP's and internal colleagues.
- Promoting the online consultation via the 5 partner websites.

5.4 We received 682 consultation responses in total. The vast majority (597) were from residents living within the Tees Valley Housing Partnership areas. Page 4 of **Appendix 2** provides a breakdown of consultation replies.

5.5 As **Appendix 2** details, all consultation proposals were supported by the majority of those who responded.

5.6 Analysis of consultation replies (both the questions and open narrative replies) had led to no further changes to the proposed policy, other than those consulted on.

5.7 Executive is asked to note that all applicants with a live application at the date the new CAP is introduced will not have a banding reduced, the banding will remain for the period the application is live and there is no change in the applicants circumstances. However, there may be instances where current live applicants may potentially secure a higher banding i.e. for acute over-crowding / young people leaving care. Work is ongoing to identify these potential applicants to ensure their banding is revised to as close as possible to the new CAP implementation date. All new applicants made after the date the new CAP is formally implemented will be banded according to the new assessment criteria.

5.8 Following consideration of the consultation replies Executive is asked to approve the new Tees Valley CAP (**Appendix 1**).

6. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

6.1 All ward members were notified and given the opportunity to respond to the recent Tees Valley Common Allocation Policy consultation exercise

7 Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

7.1 The alternative of Middlesbrough ceasing to be part of the Tees Valley Lettings partnership has been considered but discounted. There are benefits to having a consistent approach across the Tees Valley as often applicants move between local authority areas. Additionally in terms of the support costs of managing a choice based lettings service, the current arrangement is more cost efficient to the Council.

7.2 An alternative to the suggested changes would be to continue to operate allocation of social housing via the current Common Allocation Policy, which has been in place since 2019 and not reflective of current needs and demand.

7.3 Following consultation this has proven to not be fit for purpose and proposed changes have been generally well received.

7.4 Please note that this new policy has been given approval as necessary by all other partners in the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership, including Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton Borough Councils.

8 Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)



Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	No financial implications expected due to the policy update.

Legal	S.167, Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 determined that each local authority is required to set up and maintain an allocation scheme. This system allows the authority to determine priority for those in housing needs.
Risk	Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	An impact assessment has been completed and there is no expected impact with regards to these categories.
Reducing Poverty	An impact assessment has been completed and there will not be a negative impact regarding poverty as this policy is for the allocation of social housing, which by its nature is more affordable, thus should help to reduce poverty.
Climate Change / Environmental	No impact
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	An impact Assessment has been completed. There will be a positive impact on those who are cared for by the local authority including bandings for those being cared for by the local authority where housing is a key contributing factor to risk, and improved bandings for Care Leavers.
Data Protection	No impact – all agreements and process underpinning the management of the Tees Valley Home Finder System will remain in place.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
A detailed Project Delivery Plan is already ongoing in preparation for approval. This will be implemented, and further communication will be sent to affected customers once this is approved.	Rachel Jenkins	30.06.2025
To implement the new policy at an agreed time with all partners. *Please note all other partners have had the policy approved through their required channels.	Rachel Jenkins	11.07.2025

Appendices

1	Final draft of proposed updated Common Allocation Policy  CAP Final Draft 2025.pdf
2	CAP Consultation report 2024  CAP Policy Consultation Appendi:

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
None		

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