



Allocations Policy Proposals – Consultation report

1.0 Purpose

This report presents the outcome of consultation with Fairfield Housing Co-operative (FHC) tenants and applicants in relation to our proposal to replace our existing allocations policy with adoption of the Perth & Kinross Common Allocations Policy (CAP) and become a partner of the Common Housing Register (CHR).

2.0 Consultation Methods

We sought feedback from customers in two separate consultation exercises:

Applicants: We wrote to 180 direct applicants to our housing list, setting out our proposals. These 180 customers included all transfer applicants (current FHC tenants) and the 20% of people on the housing lists with highest priority for re-housing. Applicants were sent a survey feedback form, which they could complete and return by post, or request an electronic copy, or download from our website and return electronically. Applicants were also able to telephone their feedback to the office.

Tenants Panel – We contacted FHC tenants who had indicated they would like to be involved in future consultation exercises and eight tenants responded to say they were interested in attending a panel discussion.

3.0 Consultation Outcome

Applicants - There was a limited response to consultation with applicants from this exercise with only five applicants responding. Their feedback was all positive and there was agreement that the proposal would simplify the process of applying for housing. One applicant queried whether an application which had high priority under FHC's existing policy would continue to have priority under the CAP. We explained that in any case FHC would need to change its prioritisation approach to comply with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014's new reasonable preference categories. Where circumstances already attracted high priority they were likely to continue to have priority under the CAP.

Tenants – Although eight members of the tenants' panel were due to attend a planned discussion, only four members attended. A presentation was given outlining

the reasons for change and there was a healthy debate and discussion. The main points of discussion were:

- 45% of FHC properties are currently allocated via the CHR and not from FHC's direct list.
- Introduction of Housing Scotland Act 2014 and its new requirements of landlords.
- Increased opportunities that the CAP will provide for Fairfield tenants to move and to areas where we don't have stock
- Applicants will have a choice of where they want to be housed
- Fairfield would become a partner of the CHR and apply the CAP but would retain its independent decision making in terms of specific allocations to applicants drawn from the CHR, while respecting the prioritisation process.
- The proposed new process for applying for housing and how this would be simplified compared to the current process.
- Transferring tenants will be given additional priority under the CHR if they are under occupying their home and want to move. However there is no pressure on anyone to move.
- Applicants who have health issues will still have this taken into account when being allocated a home.

The panel consulted were all in agreement that the proposal would be a positive step for Fairfield and its applicants.

4.0 New Policy proposals

As the consultation process raised no major concerns impacting on adoption of the proposed policy, FHC's Management Committee approved that this be adopted.

Initially it was proposed and agreed that the current Co-operative policy that families with children over 5 years old should have one bedroom allocated for each child. should have their own room from age 5 and our experience is that this is a policy.

Further discussion with the Council however reinforced the desirability and need for consistency across all partners in the CHR, such that an alternative proposal was suggested and subsequently agreed.

New applicants: The complete Common Housing Allocations Policy will be applied to any new applicants to the CHR who wish to consider Fairfield as a housing option.

Existing direct applicants to Fairfield, including transfers: Where existing applicants have been awarded overcrowding points for children over the age of five where this would not apply under the CAP, these will be treated as legacy applications and the house size points honoured unless the applicant volunteers to surrender these e.g. in order to be considered for a wider range of properties.

5. Conclusions and rationale for adopting the CAP and joining the CHR

- Feedback from applicants and the tenants panel was limited, but positive about the proposals.
- Adopting the CAP would ensure FHC's allocations policy & practice is compliant with current legislation and good practice including Housing Scotland Act (2014).
- It would allow FHC homes to be allocated to those in priority housing need in a fair and more consistent way. As a general needs housing provider, it is unlikely that an independently developed policy would differ materially from the CAP, with the exception of requirements for Co-op membership and greater generosity in size of house offered relative to household size for families with children over five years old. On the other hand the current policy excludes families with two children of the same gender, or two children of different genders under 10, from access to our much larger number of two bedroom properties.
- It would eliminate the risk that applicants in urgent need or with complex or particular housing needs who apply only to FHC do not receive the range of housing options support and advice they require.
- It would increase FHC's ability to support PKC in its work to reduce the time homeless applicants have to wait for an offer of permanent housing.
- It would increase access to more suitable homes for FHC tenants who are in housing need and who are currently on FHC's transfer list by opening up priority for a wider pool of properties, via the CAP group system (24% properties allocated to this group).
- It would provide a policy which is easier to understand than FHC's current policy and ensure fair and transparent access to FHC homes and to those of all the major social landlords in Perth, without applicants having to make a separate application to FHC.
- It would continue to offer the flexibility of our current policy in allocating 2 bedroom housing therefore reducing the extreme pressure on Perth & Kinross social landlords in terms of demand for 1 bedroom housing.
- It would improve our ability to make best use of the housing stock and make the best "match" of housing need to property type.
- All administrative tasks would be completed by PKC.
- FHC would no longer require a separate Nominations Agreement with the PKC.
- There is a positive cost: benefit ratio with anticipated costs of participation being offset by release of approx 0.6 FTE of current staff resources at FHC to be re-directed towards our other service improvement priorities.

Regulatory Compliance	<p>Regulatory Standard 2 The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.</p> <p>Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes 1,2,3,7,8,9,10,11,12</p>
Fit with Business Plan Strategic Objectives and Delivery Plan	Strategic Objective 3: Excellent, continually improving, modern, customer –driven services and performance.
Financial Impact	Annual cost is based on units in management and for FHC would be £13,878, charged pro rata basis for this financial year from the month we join. Cost implications have been discussed with the Finance Agent who has confirmed that the budget includes £13,500. Estimated spend for 19/20 is £10,408.
Risk Assessment	Low. The proposal mitigates risks of non-compliance with the Housing (Scotland) Act.
Equality Impact	<p>Proposal improves equal opportunity to access to suitable housing, particularly for equalities groups such as disabled people.</p> <p>We have not carried out a formal equalities impact assessment and have not been able to obtain one from PKC.</p>

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