



**Tattenhall & District Parish Council**  
**Informal meeting to CW&C Housing Allocations Policy**  
**11<sup>th</sup> March 2021 via Teams.**

**PRESENT**

CW&C Senior Housing Policy Officer – Allan Batty  
Malpas Parish Council & Threapwood Parish Council – Chris Whitehurst\*  
No Mans Heath & District Parish Council – Trevor Parker\*, Stephen Roberts\*  
& Mike Voisey  
Tattenhall & District Parish Council – Ian Keeping, Ann Wright (Clerk)  
Tattenhall Community Land Trust – Carol Spencer  
Tarporey Parish Council - Gill Clough, Lisa Miller  
West Cheshire Housing Manager – Terry Upton  
\* Members of Malpas & District Community Land Trust

**Purpose of Meeting: Presentation on changes to CW&C Housing allocation Policy**

Mr Batty gave a presentation on the changes to the CW&C housing allocations policy, he stated the policy had taken a long time to produce and would be live from the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

He confirmed all local authorities must have housing allocations policy which sets the criteria on which houses are allocated, priorities and operation. Housing allocation policies can give 'reasonable preference' or a 'head start' to people for the following reasons, homelessness, overcrowding, medical or welfare need, due to the unsatisfactory condition of their current property or to be moved from a locality for hardship reasons.

One of the biggest changes to the policy is the reduction of priority banding from 5 to 3 bands, this had resulted from responses to the consultation and the view that 5 bands had been too complicated.

Bands A, urgent need, and B, high need, are unchanged.

A new 'Housing Options' band has been introduced for everyone who does not fall into Bands A and B and do not have a statutory need for housing.

'Right to Move' – people will still be able to apply for housing under the right to move which allows people in social housing in other parts of the country to apply for social housing in Cheshire if they are having to move to the area for work.

The West Cheshire Homes website has been updated and will include a section on what other types of properties are available in addition to social rented to support those in the new Housing Options Band e.g., shared ownership, private rented.

Other changes to the policy include:

To apply for a property, you will need to have a minimum 2-year connection to the Borough.

People can only bid for 3 properties during a bid period, previously people might bid on as many properties as possible in the belief this would increase the likelihood of them getting a property. This will help to speed up the bidding process.

The definition for overcrowding has been updated.

There will no longer be a rural preference unless this is identified in the planning conditions for the property.

Clear rules are in place for direct lettings, where properties are let without being advertised, and the number of properties that can be let in this way is limited each year to 10% of the properties that become available.

People can only bid once they have resolved any rental arrears of up to £1k.

People will not be allowed to bid if their savings or investments are above set levels:

Aged up to 55 = £25k

Aged over 55 = £125k

Individuals with an income of £45k+ or couples with an income of £60k+ are excluded from bidding, which is common across the Country.

It is recognised that these are big changes and as such fact sheets will be available when the new policy goes live in the help section of the website.

A number of new procedures sit below the policy which will assist staff and also housing associations.

When the policy goes live on the 5<sup>th</sup> April a new online customer application form will be available and an advice line is in place during March to assist those on the existing register whose banding has changed. If their circumstances have changed they will be able to complete the application form and be reassessed.

It was reported that there are 9k people on the housing register of which 4.5k are in the new Options Band.

It was agreed that additional information including the presentation would be circulate to those in attendance.

## **Question & Answer Session**

### Bid Period

It was noted the weekly bidding cycle will no longer exist instead properties will be advertised when they become available for a minimum of 4 days, people on the housing register will be encouraged to set up alerts to be notified if a property they are eligible for becomes available.

The online bidding system will calculate the number of bids people have made and prevent more than 3 bids being placed.

There will no longer be a weekly list of properties circulated.

### Rural Allocations

It was reported that since 2010 in Malpas there have been approximately 400 new dwellings built of which around 133 are affordable properties, 41 of which are managed by Plus Dane. However very few local people have been able to obtain these properties. As such concern was raised regarding local people being able to find homes who need to stay in the area. It was suggested that this question would not be answered until the new system had been put in place, it was therefore asked if the policy would be reviewed in 12 months to judge its effectiveness.

It was stated that a 12-month review was unlikely but the policy would be continuously monitored.

It was stated that people do tend to apply for homes in the place they are familiar with.

How properties would be dealt with that are not taken up when advertised will vary according to the attached planning conditions etc.

It was noted the housing register had been closed during March to allow the migration to the new register but those already on the register had been able to bid for properties.

The website, [www.westcheshirehomes.co.uk](http://www.westcheshirehomes.co.uk) has a new help section which includes a range of guides which can be accessed by anyone regardless of if they are on the housing register, these include guides on local connections, housing related debt, as well as change to the allocation policy.

A useful links section which includes links for those in private rented accommodation which is in disrepair is available on the website along with FAQs which address among other things how likely someone is to be allocated a property.

It was noted that approximately 1200 social rented properties become available each year and tend to attract 30/40 bids or applications each.

#### Non-Digital Support

It was noted that the website is very good and useful but that there is still large number of people who do not access information online and who just don't have the ability to access the system.

It was noted that staff will deal with bids etc by phone where there is no other alternative and that friends, family or support workers can access the system on others behalf and now a secondary email can be added to make sure people do receive notifications.

It was noted Age UK and Citizens Advice had been made aware of changes to the housing allocation policy and procedures.

#### Rural Guide

It was agreed to create a rural guide to be added to the website to allow those bidding on rural properties to understand the difference between rural and urban areas e.g., reduced facilities and infrastructure and reduced access to public transport.

It was agreed to set a date mid-April to work on this guide.

#### Supply and Demand

It was discussed that there is a large disparity between the properties available and those which are needed and whether this can be addressed through planning.

It was reported that currently there are 180 households in hotels or temporary accommodation the vast majority of which are single people aged under 55 and that there is a shortage of 1-bed properties particularly in the Chester area.

All were thanked for attending the meeting which had been extremely useful.

Ann Wright  
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