

		Classification: Open	Decision Type: Approval and recommendation to Cabinet
Report to:	Housing Advisory Board		Date: 10 September 2026
Subject:	Review and amendments to Bury Council's Housing Allocations Policy		
Report of	Director of Housing		

Summary

1. The council is required under Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996 to have an allocations policy for determining the priorities and procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation.
2. The council last reviewed its in September 2025 and following consultation published the Allocations Policy in May 2025. The policy states it will be reviewed every year or earlier if new legislation requires major amendments to be made.
3. We have reviewed the Allocations Policy and propose two minor changes;
 - a. The policy makes no provision for retiring service tenants whose accommodation is a condition of their employment and who will lose their service accommodation on retirement to be rehoused by the council through a direct let. The paper proposes amending the Allocations Policy to take account of such circumstances.
 - b. The policy does not currently allow for direct lets at the discretion of the Director of Housing. It is proposed that the policy is amended to enable this is expectation circumstances.
4. No further changes are proposed as part of the review.

Recommendation(s)

5. **It is recommended that Housing Advisory Board review the proposed changes and recommend their approval to Cabinet.**

Reasons for recommendation(s)

6. The council has properties it lets to employees such as caretakers or park wardens as part of their employment contract. When these employees retire they lose their service tenancy and as at risk of becoming homeless. In order to prevent them becoming homeless and to ensure a planned moved it is

recommended that the Allocations Policy is amended to allow for a direct let to a council tenancy at the point of retirement.

Alternative options considered and rejected

7. Do nothing and not amend the Allocations Policy. This option has been rejected as it would leave long standing employees at risk of homelessness.

Report Author and Contact Details:

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Background

8. The Council is required under Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996 to have an allocation policy for determining the priorities and procedure to be followed in allocating housing accommodation. It is also good practice to publish details of the process, eligibility criteria and the key factors that will be considered when determining applications.
9. The Allocations Policy aims to provide a consistent approach to dealing with the housing needs and aspirations of the local population. The council also understands that a small number of people have complex needs and so the policy allows for some management discretion to achieve positive outcomes for those individuals who do not easily fit the mainstream.
10. The council carried out a full review of its Allocations Policy in 2024 and the draft for consultation was signed off by Cabinet at its meeting on 4th September 2024. Cabinet also delegated any post consultation amendments to the Cabinet member for Housing in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance. Following consultation the Allocations Policy was published in May 2025.

Allocations policy aims and objectives

11. The general aim of the policy is to assist as many people as possible into settled accommodation by offering applicants a choice of quality housing, whilst continuing to give reasonable preference of those in the most urgent housing need.
12. The objectives of the policy are;
 - Meet housing need and support the most vulnerable
 - Create sustainable tenancies

- Balance housing needs as far as possible with customer aspirations
- Make best use of the Council's housing stock
- Make best use of the Council's nominations rights to housing associations/ private registered provider properties
- Ensure a quality lettings service that embraces equality and diversity

13. Demand for social housing continues to outstrip the number of properties available and it is up to the council to ensure that there remains fair and equitable access to what has become a scarce resource. The law requires the council to give 'reasonable preference' to certain groups of people and this is reflected in the policy.
14. At the end of March 2026 we had 2052 applicants on the housing register. The breakdown of their housing need by bedroom is shown in the table below. The table also shows the average waiting time in days for each property size.

Bedroom requirement	Number of applicants as at 31st March 2026	Average waiting time in days as at 31st March 2026
One bed	1040	449
Two bed	517	624
Three bed	415	754
Four bed	72	693
More than four beds	14	1199
Total	2052	

15. The table below shows the number of people on the housing register in each band;

Band	Number of applicants at 31st March 2026
Band 1	344
Band 2	489
Band 3	669
Band 4	436
Band 5	192
Total	2130

16. In 2025/26 we allocated 567 properties. The table below shows the number properties advertised on choice based lettings.

Bedroom size	Advertised
One bed	223
Two bed	171
Three bed	35
Four bed	0
More than four beds	0
	429

17. We also approved 138 direct lets, 95 of which were made to applicants in band 1. Direct lets made up 24% of all lets. A breakdown of the reasons for direct lets are shown below;

- 57 Homeless applicants
- 45 Managed moves
- 36 Care leavers

18. 36% of allocations were to applicants in band one in 2025/26 showing that a significant proportion of available homes need to be prioritised to meet statutory duties.

Allocating properties and direct let

19. The Allocations Policy applies to all available homes for let which are owned by the Council and housing associations that are subject to Council nomination rights. Most properties are allocated through the Council's choice based lettings scheme. The policy also recognises that there may be some exceptional circumstances that are not suitable for Choice Based Lettings. In these instances the Director of Housing is authorised to let a property directly based on the merits of the case.
20. The circumstances where a direct let may be appropriate are set out in section 7 of the Allocations Policy. These are;
- The safeguarding and protection of applicants and existing tenants for reasons of domestic violence, harassment or hate crime or where Multi Agency Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) or National Witness Mobility Scheme has recommended that an applicant should not bid for fear of being identified.
 - The accommodation of applicants who present with complex needs.
 - Households recommended for, or subject to, A Family Intervention Tenancy (FIT).
 - Applicants that have been under occupying and requiring rehousing to a smaller property due to hardship or affordability issues.
 - Allocating homeless households to temporary accommodation through the Housing Options Service.
 - Applicants requiring specially adapted properties.

- Rehousing tenants who are vacating a specially adapted property or large family homes in favour of an applicant on the Housing Register to whom the property is more suited.
 - Retirement living accommodation, in extra care units or properties designated for elderly applicants.
 - Civil contingency emergencies, meeting the Council's obligations (such as refugee crisis) and the allocation of properties that fail to attract bids.
21. In reviewing the Allocations Policy, it has been identified that the policy makes no provision to enable a direct let for retiring service tenants whose accommodation is a condition of their employment and who will lose their service accommodation on retirement.
22. It is proposed to add an additional provision to the list above that states;
- Retiring service tenants whose current accommodation is a condition for their contract of employment and who will lose their accommodation when they retire.
23. The review of the policy also highlighted that the current policy does not allow for direct lets at the discretion of the Director of Housing outside these list above. It is proposed to add the following amendment to the Section 7 of the policy. The proposed text is in bold italics;
- ‘The council reserves the power to make as many direct let offers as it thinks fit to meet the needs outlined above, ***and in other similar circumstances at the discretion of the Director of Housing.*** The council will, however, ensure that the number of offers under direct lets remains a fraction of the total lettings. The majority of properties will continue to be let through Choice Based Lettings.’
24. The rest of the Allocations Policy remains unchanged.

Links with the Housing and Corporate Priorities:

Please summarise how this links to Let's Do It Strategy and Let's Do Housing.

Tenant voice

Please summarise how the tenants voice has influenced the recommendation or approach where applicable

Equality Impact and Considerations:

Please provide an explanation of the outcome(s) of an initial or full EIA. There must be a signed off EIA template appended with a full analysis or explanation as to why an analysis is not needed for the report to be put forward to HAB.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

*Please provide an explanation of the Environmental impact of this decision. Please include the impact on both **Carbon emissions** (contact climate@bury.gov.uk for advice) and **Biodiversity** (contact S.Tinsley@bury.gov.uk and Dennis.whittle@bury.gov.uk for advice)*

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Link to Housing Strategic risk register

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation

Procurement Implications:

Legal/ Regulatory Implications:

Financial Implications:

Appendices:

Please list any appended documents (please save these as clearly labelled separate documents in the Teams folder).

Background papers:

Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning