

Torpoint Town Council

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Sent: 30 October 2024 11:29
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Subject: Housing Allocation
Attachments: housing allocation Oct 2024 (003) GA comments.docx; LBF PC Policy on Social Housing Feb22 v5.docx

Please find attached:

1. Letter from Lanteglos by Fowey Parish Council
2. Our Policy on Social Housing.

Please would you share these documents with your Councillors and consider adding as a discussion item to your next Full Council Meeting?

Kind regards

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Cornwall housing allocations – do these shocking figures match those in your parish?

In the two years to March 31 2024, ten council-owned properties in Lanteglos parish became vacant. Out of those ten, one went to a person/family with a local connection. Currently, Cornwall Council is paying out many millions of pounds to accommodate homeless families. Lanteglos-by-Fowey Parish Council (LBFPC) thinks these statistics are linked.

Lanteglos by Fowey is a rural Parish but with more than 50 homes for social rent. This means the 'Parish Preference Label,' as defined in the Cornwall Housing Allocation Policy is not applicable. This situation is unfair for rural parishes such as ours as it is impossible for anyone with a local connection on 'Band D or E' priority to obtain social housing locally.

For the past three years, LBFPC has urged a change in Cornwall's housing policy – that in a spirit of fairness and recognising the need to keep communities together during an avoidable housing crisis, allocations to Cornwall Council-owned properties should alternate between those in highest need (for example homeless people) and people from the parish who have a local connection whatever their banding.

Cornwall Council has contemptuously dismissed this suggestion. LBFPC believes the reason is that the need to reduce the millions spent on homeless families trumps the needs of people from the parish.

LBFPC believes this is grossly unfair and that there is a danger of homeless people being blamed for this situation. To be clear, LBFPC stands in solidarity with homeless people. They, together with people in need from the parishes, are victims of a crisis which is decades in the making. Cornwall Council could, at a stroke, make fundamental changes to its housing policy which would bring immediate relief. Lanteglos-by-Fowey Parish Council has drawn up a housing manifesto which we recommend to you and which is appended to this letter for your information.

But for now, LBFPC is asking for your support in persuading Cornwall Council to adopt this policy in relation to housing allocation:

“Housing allocation should be on the basis of alternately letting to people in desperate need (with or without parish connections) followed by letting to bidders from the parish whatever their banding criteria. This is recognition that, at present, demand outstrips supply but maintaining our local communities in Cornwall should be a priority. Once publicly-owned housing for rent meets demand, the need for this measure will disappear.”

Cornwall Council has shown it is immune to a call for change from one small, rural parish. It will not find it so easy to do so if many town and parish councils, from Bude to Land's End, join us. Please consider this matter at your next meeting.

LANTEGLOS BY FOWEY HOUSING POLICY

Introduction

Lanteglos-by-Fowey Parish Council (LBFPC) deplores the chronic lack of social housing in the parish and wider afield in Cornwall. LBFPC believes its policy on housing, approved at its November 2021 meeting and inspired by a similar policy approved by Bude-Stratton Town Council, offers a way forward.

It is hoped that other town and parish councils in Cornwall will endorse LBFPC's housing policy and in so doing, convince our elected representatives to take the appropriate action.

LBFPC notes that its housing policy needs to be widely-known within the parish. Accordingly, LBFPC resolves to support the following.

1. **Policy 1 - Increase social housing and affordable homes in Cornwall** - to enable local people to remain in Cornwall and ensure we keep thriving Cornish communities.
 - 1.1. **Halt Right to Buy in Cornwall.** This policy has created an acute shortage of publicly-owned (and therefore accountable, well-maintained and affordable) homes for local people. It has funnelled in-need people into the arms of landlords, where there is no security of tenure and little control over the protection of vulnerable tenants. Within the main town of our parish, Polruan, some 28% of social housing stock has been lost through right to buy and some 10% of this are now second homes. Cornwall Council must end Right to Buy to send a strong signal to the people of Cornwall that it has the interests of the people it represents at heart.
 - 1.2. **End Bedroom Tax.** This policy, derived from the sale of council houses, meant remaining stock was at a premium so council tenants with extra bedrooms were stigmatised and penalised. Cornwall Council needs to end this policy
 - 1.3. **Increase affordable housing stock for purchase** - selling new properties to local residents only (a clear definition of 'local resident' is required throughout Cornwall to ensure homes are fairly allocated)
 - 1.4. **Increase the stock of social housing.** Cornwall Council has significant financial resources, and given the severe need for social housing, could use its financial weight to build publicly-owned, publicly-controlled social housing for rent. Using its own well-trained, well-paid, well-motivated workforce to design and build these homes, Cornwall Council could become a motive force for economic regeneration in the county.
 - 1.5. **Reduce Cornwall Council partnerships with developers.** Current council policy is fundamentally flawed in that hundreds of millions of pounds of public money is given to private developers for Cornwall to fulfil its house-building commitment. Developers' pursuit of profit, at the expense of meeting local need, is at least partly-responsible for the current dire shortage of decent, affordable, publicly-owned housing for rent.
 - 1.6. **Requisition empty or underused properties** to house residents in desperate need. There are current and historical precedents for such action.
 - 1.7. **Allocations of council-owned or council partner-controlled housing** in a parish is to alternate between those deemed in desperate need, followed by an allocation to applicants with a connection to the parish. Town/parish councils to be consulted at every stage of the process

2. **Policy 2 - Reduce second home ownership and holiday rentals.**

In the Parish of Lanteglos by Fowey, some 50% of homes are owned by people whose main residence is outside Cornwall. Many of these houses remain empty for significant periods, affecting the vitality of our communities. At the same time, there is a significant shortage of housing stock for local people. We are at risk of our local communities dying out.

- 2.1. **Make it less attractive to own second homes** – introduce a Cornwall-wide Register of Second Homes, increase council tax levies, put in planning constraint, introduce caps on numbers of second homes in in key areas.
- 2.2. **Make it less attractive buy holiday rentals** - increase business rates and ensure council tax is being paid if properties are not being fully rented etc
- 2.3. **Make it more attractive to rent to long term tenants** – grants or subsidies by the council toward council rentals, incentives to private landlords etc

3. **Policy 3 - Put People First and improve the quality of life for tenants**

- 3.1. **Council-owned (or council housing provider partner owned) housing** in the parish to be alternately allocated to those who have a local connection to the parish and those from within Cornwall who come from wider afield. The allocation procedure to be transparent.
- 3.2. **Bring back secure tenancies for all housing under Cornwall Council control.** It is unacceptable that tenants live in a permanent state of anxiety about eviction. S.21, no fault, evictions need to be ended. It may be said that Cornwall Council cannot intervene in the relationship between landlord and tenant and the courts. Surely with the political will, Cornwall Council could create a climate whereby landlords who evict tenants without just cause are penalised. Cornwall Council could declare that no S.21 eviction can take place unless there is suitable, local, alternative accommodation available.
- 3.3. **Set up rent tribunals throughout Cornwall.** This will ensure that rents reflect local incomes.
- 3.4. **Set up a register of private landlords.** This will serve to protect tenants somewhat protected from unscrupulous landlords. The register could, for instance, record whether a landlord is DBS-checked, if they have applied for S.21 evictions and if so, how many etc.
- 3.5. **Change the definition of affordability.** "Affordability" should be linked to local incomes rather than local house prices.
- 3.6. **Close the house transfer register to people with no Cornwall connection.**

4. **Actions**

- 4.1. To advertise the LBFPC policy in a box of text, superimposed on the photograph on the council's homepage, with a link to the full policy.
- 4.2. A leaflet, which summarises the main points of the housing policy, is produced and agreed at the January or February meeting of LBFPC, after which it is distributed to every home in the parish.
- 4.3. That the LBFPC housing policy appears as a standing item on the LBFPC agenda every three months for possible review

Adopted by Council 11th January 2022, Minute 4b/2022

Amended by Council 28th March 2023, Minute 52a/2023
Amended by Council 16th January 2024, Minute 5a/2024