Teignbridge District Council
Executive
Tuesday 10th March 2026
Part i

Devon Home Choice Policy Change

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the policy change to Devon Home Choice, the Social Housing Register for Teignbridge and Devon local authorities.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee RESOLVES to:

(1) Approve the policy decision to offer an additional preference on the housing register for households seeking to downsize large family homes.

Financial Implications

See 2.1
Gordon Bryant – Head of Financial Services and Audit
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Legal Implications

See 2.2
Marie Downey- Solicitor
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Risk Assessment

See 2.3
Tammy Hayes - Housing Needs Lead
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Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

See 2.4
William Elliot - Climate Change Officer
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Report Author

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Executive Member

Councillor Richard Buscombe, Executive Member for Housing and Homelessness

Appendices/Background Papers

EIA Attached [Yes]

1. Introduction/Background

In April 2024, Full Council agreed to a pilot of 12 months that provided for social housing tenants within Devon to receive a 5 year backdate to their band start date. The purpose of this pilot was to establish the impact of this policy change.

The backdate was applied to 43 existing applications on 1st October 2024 and all new applications from this date.

Between October 2024 and 19th December 2025, 357 homes were advertised to let within Teignbridge. 19 of these homes were allocated to households downsizing 3 or more bedrooms following the increased priority the backdated band start date provided. As a result, the number of households seeking to downsize larger family homes reduced to 29.

This has supported local residents to move more quickly through Devon Home Choice, improve their financial position by moving to smaller homes and indirectly supported in reduced utility costs overall.

Around 50% of the adverts were offered the preference to those households that Teignbridge District Council owed a homeless duty to and were therefore not impacted by this policy change.

We are satisfied that the pilot has not unduly impacted our ability to discharge our homeless duties, or for the remainder of the housing register to apply for social housing. The homes released by this policy change are all advertised on Devon Home Choice.

2. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

2.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications of this change. Indirectly, and in time, it will allow a more precise allocation of homes so council resources will be better employed.

2.2 Legal

There are no legal implications from this policy change. More particularly no impact on the Council's statutory duty in respect of homelessness legislation. There are no legal implications from this policy change. More particularly no impact on the Councils' statutory duty in respect of homelessness legislation.

2.3 Risks

The purpose of the 12-month pilot was to fully establish the risks that a disproportionate policy change that could impact other households seeking social housing. This could have included increased time in temporary accommodation.

We are satisfied that the impact of the policy change has supported households downsize their homes, which in turn has enabled more homes to become available for larger families to bid upon.

2.4 Environmental/Climate Change Impact

Supporting households to downsize social housing homes into smaller homes will support a lower energy use for that household. Therefore, an additional priority in terms of waiting time on the register to expedite a move, is likely to support reduction in energy use for most households impacted most.

3. Alternative Options

We could remove this additional priority for households occupying social tenancies of 3 bed or larger which would result in longer wait times for these households to be offered smaller homes.

4. Conclusion

We are satisfied that the policy change does not adversely affect the weighting of the allocation policy. Supporting households to downsize from larger family homes not only supports additional adverts for these homes once empty but supports the residents in managing their finances and mitigates the impact of cost-of-living pressures.