The Highland Council

Community Services Committee – 18 August 2016

Annual Monitoring Report: Housing Allocations Policy

Report by the Director of Community Services

Summary

This report provides annual monitoring information on the operation of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) allocations policy for 2015/2016. It highlights key issues in relation to the supply and demand for social rented housing in Highland. The report also identifies areas for further policy review.

1. Background

1.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 sets out the main legal duties regarding access to housing registers and the allocations of social rented housing.

1.2 The Highland Council and the five main registered social landlords in Highland implemented a common housing register with a single allocations policy in 2008. The Highland Housing Register (HHR) is subject to ongoing monitoring with an annual report to the Community Services Committee and to the Boards of partner organisations. The annual HHR allocations monitoring report for 2015/16 is set out in **Appendix 1.**

2. Allocations Monitoring

2.1 The number of applicants on the register has decreased by 307 (4%) in the last year, and stood at 7,331 as at 31 March 2016. This is the third consecutive year we have seen a reduction in the number of applicants. This reflects the more efficient management of the register through the annual review process and reassessment of circumstances. These changes help to ensure that the housing register is as up to date as possible. Despite the overall reduction in the number of applicants there are still significant levels of unmet housing need in most parts of Highland.

2.2 There were a total of 2021 offers of housing made by all the partners in 2015/16. As a result of these, 1678 applicants were housed. This equates to approximately 1.6 offers made for each property let. The number of applications with homeless priority points remained fairly static at 502 which equates to 7% of all applications held. At year end 31 March 2016, there were a total of 245 applications suspended, of which 16 applications were due to the refusal of 2 offers of reasonable housing. The details of suspensions are detailed in **Appendix 1**.

2.3 The annual monitoring report demonstrates that the housing allocations policy is largely meeting its objectives in relation to meeting housing needs. Chart 10

in **Appendix 1** provides a summary of the proportion of applicants in each category of need and the proportion of applicants with those needs being housed.

2.4 The Annual Monitoring Report also contains information on the number of housing applications and the outcomes for applicants from different ethnic groups.

3. Need to Reside

3.1 Need to Reside points reflect a need for an applicant to be in a particular community whether they live or work there or have a care and support need to be there. Points are awarded where applicants can prove that they been resident in a community for at least 12 months (at the point of the offer of housing). 86% of all applicants housed during the period had Need to Reside points.

4. Low Demand Caithness

4.1 Choice Based Lettings was introduced in Caithness on 16 February 2015 to address issues of low demand. Introduced initially in the Wick area, this has been extended recently to include Thurso and all properties (with the exception of sheltered units) are now allocated under Choice Based Lettings. There are properties in area where there is no demand and specific proposals for disposal of surplus stock are detailed in the Performance report to this Committee.

5. Armed Forces

5.1 Data about the Armed Forces has been captured on our Highland Housing Register applications since February 2014 and on our re-registration forms since July 2014. The data collected so far tells us that we currently have 19 currently serving members and 32 previous members of the Armed Forces on our housing register. 6 households in total have been rehoused in the last year, which is 50% more than the previous period. We continue to work closely with the Armed Forces to address any issues for applicants.

6. Online Form & Housing Options Website

6.1 An online HHR application form went live in November 2015. Applicants can use the Highland Council website to apply using My Account. From 11 November 2015 to 31 March 2016 there were 352 applications made online. Early indications are that this will continue to increase as HHR partners promote this. Further updates will be reported in future monitoring reports.

7. Implications

7.1 **Resources**: There are no specific implications arising from this report.

7.2 **Legal**: The current housing allocation policy is considered to meet current

legal requirements and none of the recommendations in the report would have legal implications.

7.3   **Equalities:** One of the main aims of the allocation policy is to allow access to housing based on housing need.

7.4   **Climate Change / Carbon Clever:** There are no specific implications arising from this report.

7.5   **Gaelic:** Housing applications and related published material about access to housing meet the Council's standards in relation to Gaelic.

7.6   **Risk:** There are no specific implications arising from this report.

7.7   **Rural:** There are specific issues in relation to housing allocations in small rural communities. The current policy seeks to address these through the award of priority for people with a need to reside within a particular community. Competing pressures for available housing can be more acute in small communities with limited housing stock and turnover.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the information contained in the Annual Monitoring Report on housing allocations and that the policy is achieving its objectives in relation to meeting housing needs.

Designation: Director of Community Services
Date: 4 August 2016
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Highland Housing Register

Allocations Monitoring Report 2015/2016

1.   Introduction

1.1.1   The Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy sets out details for annual performance monitoring. The Policy is available at:
https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/3066/highland_housing_register_allocations_policy

1.1.2   The Aims of the Policy are:
   -   To provide housing to those in the greatest need, dependant on individual circumstances
   -   To help to prevent and deal with homelessness.
   -   To help create and maintain strong and economically viable communities.
   -   To work with our partner HHR landlords to provide suitable housing for those with special needs.
   -   To make the best use of the housing available.
   -   To give applicants a range of choices of housing.
   -   To help applicants move within the Highland area, and from other parts of the UK.
   -   To monitor performance and respond to changing patterns of needs by regularly reviewing this allocations policy.
   -   To inform the Highland Council's planning processes.

1.2   This report relates to the period 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016. It contains monitoring information and commentary summarising how the housing allocations policy has operated over the last year.

1.3   The figures are for all the Highland Housing Register Partners and not just the Highland Council.

2.   Monitoring Information

2.1   Applications

2.1.1   There were a total of 7,331 applications at 31 March 2016, compared to 7,638 at 31 March 2015, a reduction of 307. This is the third consecutive year we have seen a reduction in the number of applicants, and this is due mainly to more efficient management of the register through better annual reviews / reassessment of circumstances. These changes help to ensure that the housing register is as up to date as possible. Despite the reduction in the number of applicants overall there are still significant levels of unmet housing need in most parts Highland.

2.1.2   Chart 1 shows the percentage of all Highland Housing Register applications broken down by those seeking a social rented tenancy from an HHR partner (Housing List: 5,395 applicants) and those from existing tenants seeking to transfer to another property: (Transfer List: 1,936 applicants). The proportions last year were 5,539 (75%) Housing List and 2,049 (25%) Transfer List.

Chart 1 - HHR Waiting List

Transfer List
27%

Waiting List
73%
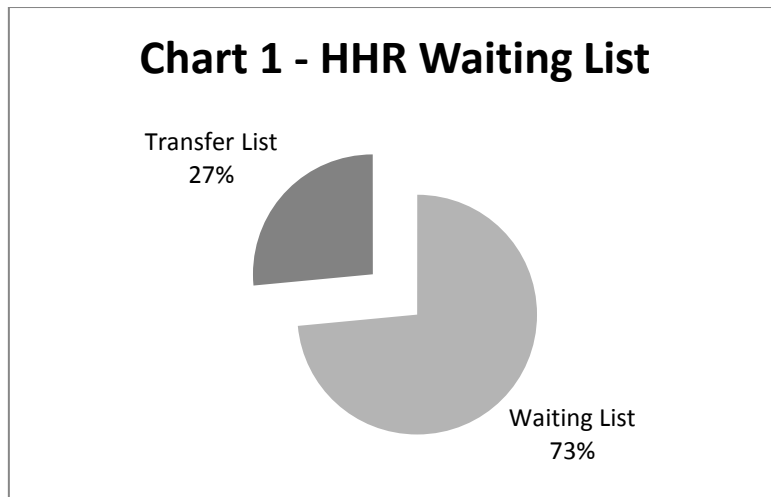
2.1.3 Chart 2 shows the number of applications each partner received. There were a total of 4,513 received last year. The partner who received the most applications was The Highland Council with 3,731, then Albyn Housing with 416, Pentland Housing with 98, Lochalsh and Skye Association with 92, Lochaber Housing Association with 89 and then Cairn Housing with 87. The numbers of applications received have remained fairly static for the last few years.

Chart 2 - No of Applications Received

Lochaber
2%

Lochalsh & Skye
2%

Cairn
2%

Pentland
2%

Albyn
9%

Highland Council
83%
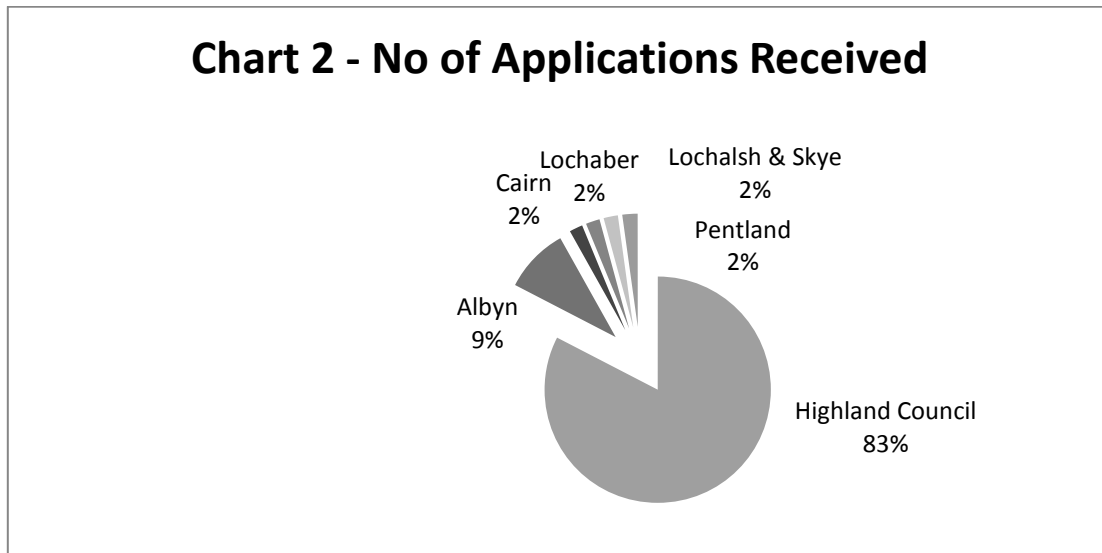
2.1.4 Chart 3 shows the total number of applicants broken down by age group. It shows that the largest group continues to be 25-59 which has remained at 64% of all applicants. The 60+ group has increased by 1% to 21% and the 16-25 group has dropped by 1% to 15%.

Chart 3 - Age Group

16-25
15%

60+
21%

25-29
64%
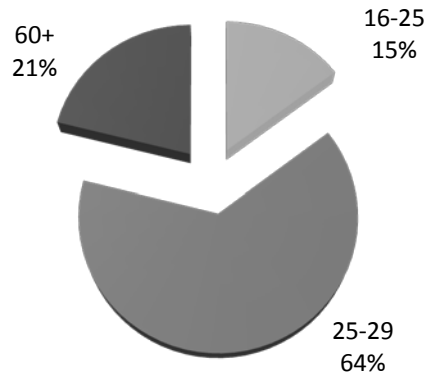
2.1.5 Chart 4 shows the number of applications by household type. It shows that the largest group continues to be single applicants (49%), with applications from couples at 10% and applications from families at 41%. The relative proportions are broadly similar to those reported last year.

Chart 4 - Household Type

Families
41%

Single
49%

Couples
10%
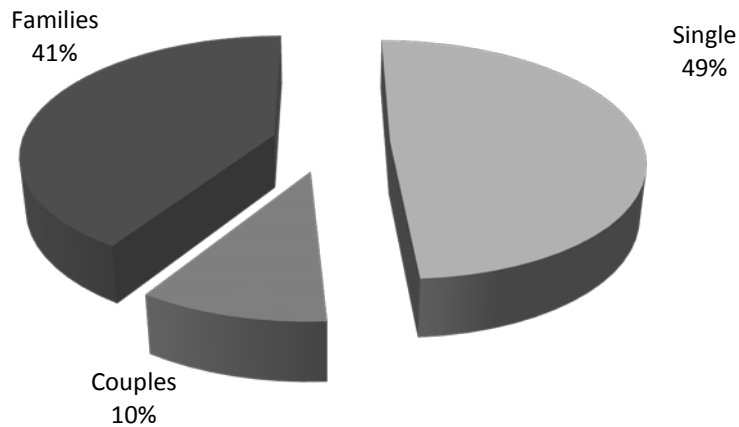
2.2   Allocations

2.2.1 Chart 5 shows that 1,678 applicants were housed in 2015/16 and shows the trend in applicants housed over time. It shows there has been a very slight decrease in the numbers housed in the last year.

Chart 5 - Number of Housed Applicants
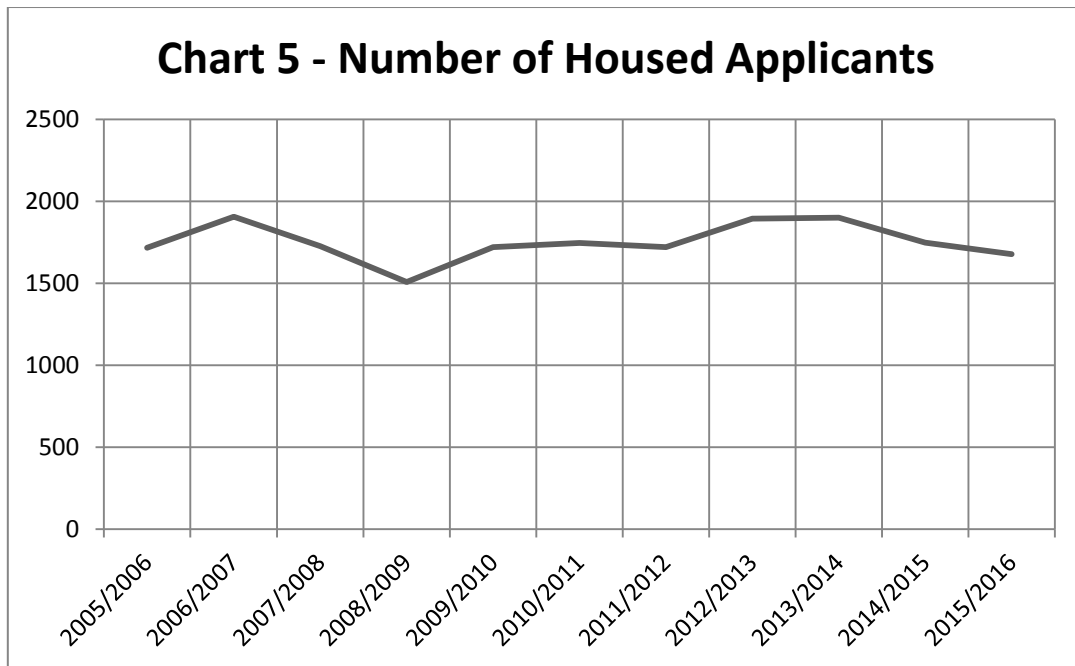
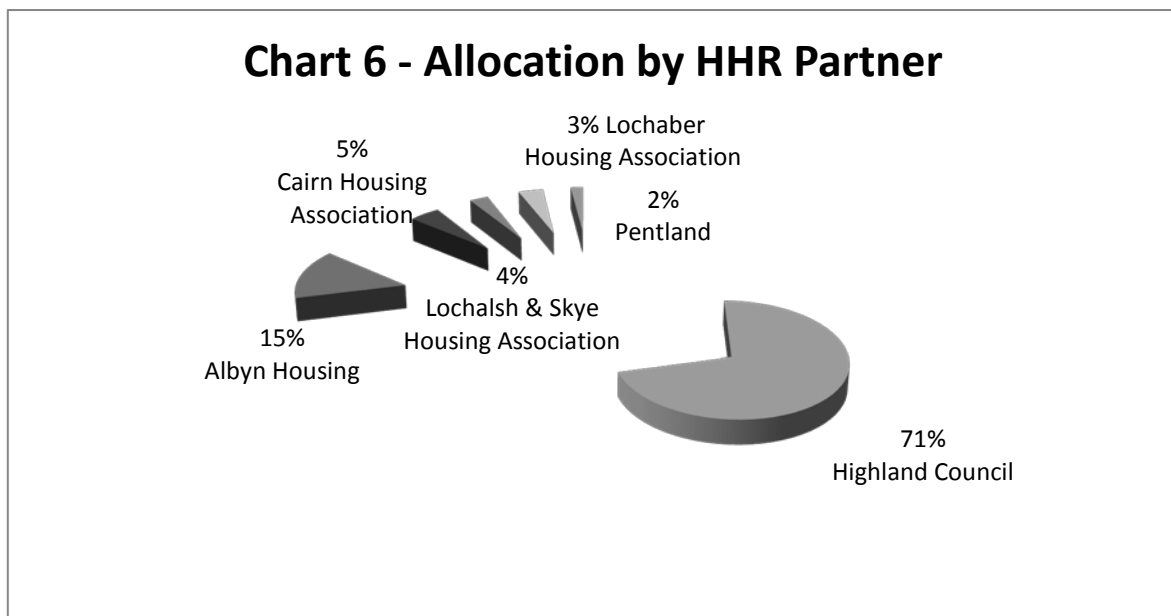2.2.2 Of the 1,678 applicants housed in 2015/16, 1,315 (78%) were from the Housing List and 363 (22%) were from the Transfer List. Allocations to Highland Council houses accounted for 1,197 (71%) of applicants housed which is a 1% increase from 2014/15.

2.2.3 Chart 6 shows the breakdown of the proportion of applicants housed by individual HHR Partners. Albyn Housing (257) Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association (63) and Lochaber Housing Association have increased by 1%. Cairn Housing Association has reduced by 3%. The Highland Council (1197) and Pentland Housing Association (37) have remained the same.

Chart 6 - Allocation by HHR Partner

5%
Cairn Housing
Association

3% Lochaber
Housing Association

2%
Pentland

4%
Lochalsh & Skye
Housing Association

15%
Albyn Housing

71%
Highland Council

2.2.5 The Chart 7 below shows how many offers each partner made.

Chart 7 - No of Offers Made

■ No of Offers Made (Includes withdrawls/refusals)

Partner	No of Offers
The Highland Council	1997
Pentland Housing Association	47
Lochalsh Housing Association	79
Lochaber Housing Association	66
Cairn Housing Association	144
Albyn Housing Society	269
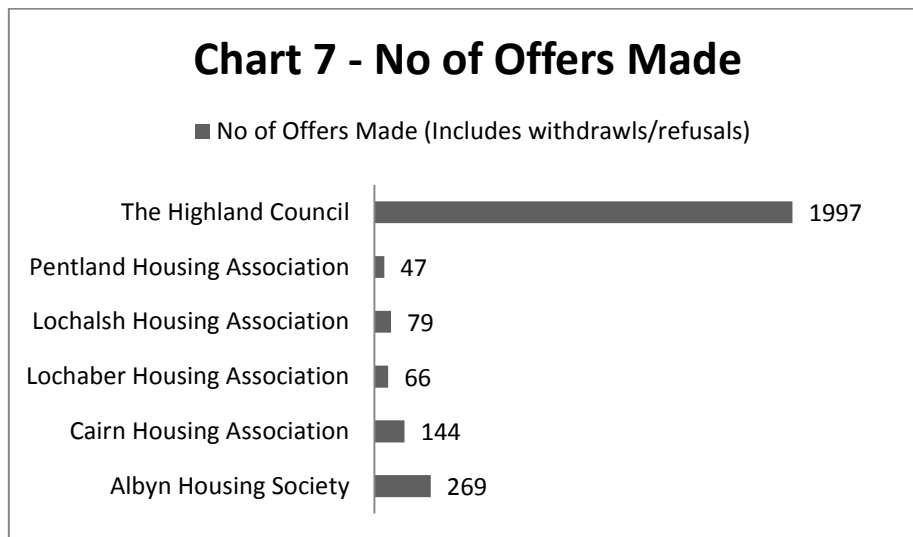
2.3 Allocations – Ethnic Origins for Applicants & Housed Applicants

2.3.1 This section of the HHR application form is not compulsory and therefore the figures reported may not be fully representative of all applicants. There has also been a reduction in the volume of new monitoring forms returned this year. A more detailed assessment of how we collect details of ethnicity requires being undertaken.

2.3.2 Chart 8 shows that the largest group of those who completed the form describe themselves as Scottish: 2,467 (79%) applicants and 429 (94%) housed applicants. British and Other White applicants are the next largest groups. Other ethnic minority groups account for a very much lower proportion of the overall housing register, however there is evidence that these groups are receiving housing outcomes through the policy.

Chart 8 – Applicants by Ethnic Origin

Ethnic Origin	Number of Applications	Number Housed
White Scottish	2467	429
White Other British	340	68
White Irish	14	2
White Gypsy/Traveller	-	1
White Polish	93	17
White Other	148	24
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic	7	2
Indian	4	-
Pakistani	3	1
Bangladeshi	6	2
Chinese	-	-
Other Asian	3	-
Caribbean	3	-
African	3	-
Other Black	1	-
Arab	5	-
Other Ethnic	9	-
Unknown	-	1
TOTAL	**3106**	**456**

2.4   Allocations – Letting Zones & Homeless Demand

2.4.1 Chart 9 shows the number of houses in each letting area; the number of applicants where the letting area is one of their choices for housing; the number and percentage of applicants housed last year in each area; and the number and percentage of applicants with homeless priority.

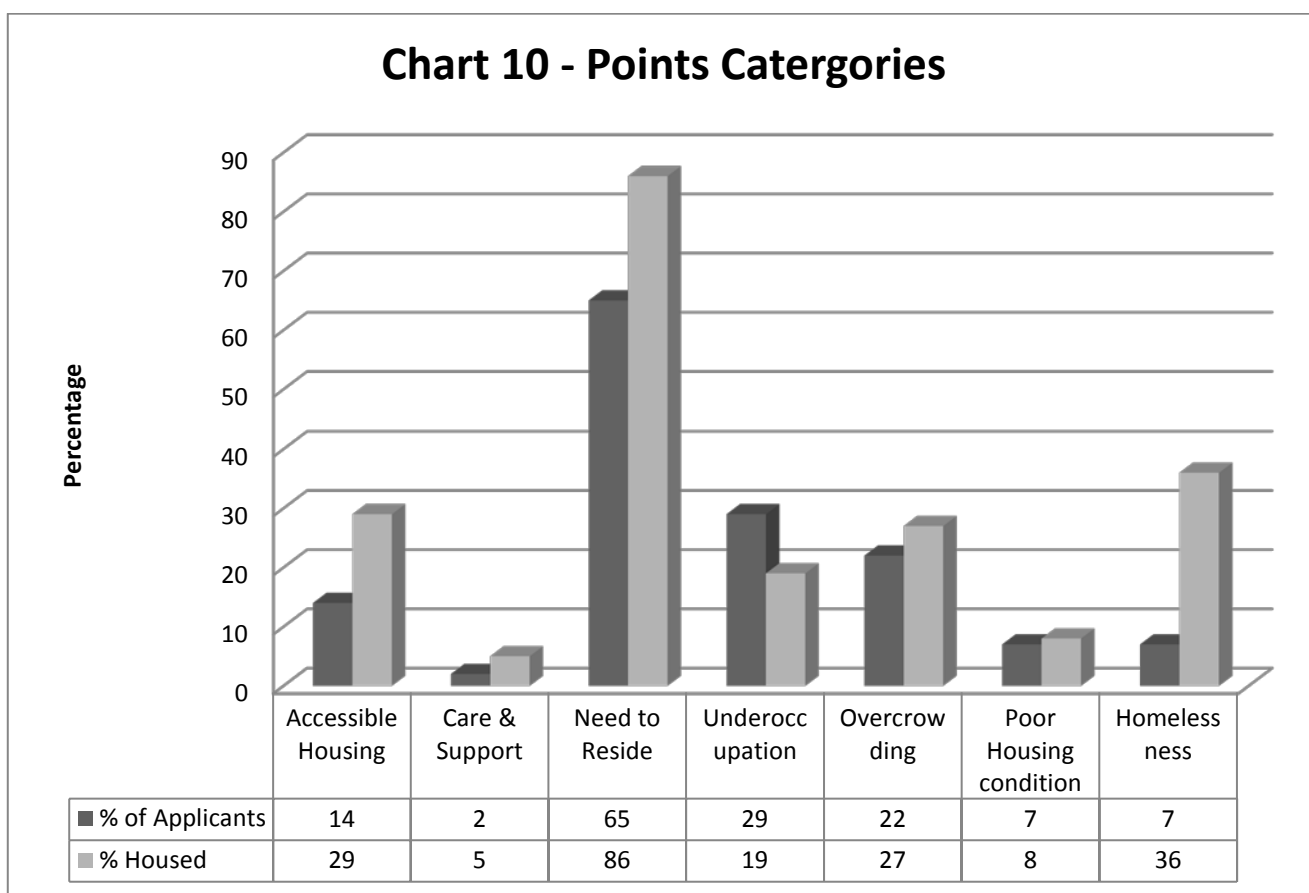## Chart 9: Housing Supply Demand and Numbers Housed including Homeless Priority

ZONE	Total Stock	Total Demand	Homeless Demand	Total Housed	% Housed of Demand	Total Homeless Housed	% of Homeless Housed of Total
Alness/Invergordon	2034	458	38	115	25	45	39
Ardersier	1016	679	62	54	8	23	43
Aviemore	495	271	17	18	7	4	22
Beauly	257	142	3	16	11	6	38
Black Isle	439	194	7	27	14	7	26
Central Lochaber	1250	435	18	132	30	71	54
East Caithness	1431	185	3	198	107	26	13
East Sutherland	865	167	4	90	54	11	12
Gairloch	137	39	1	17	43	3	18
Grantown	235	107	5	12	11	5	42
Inverness City	4471	1893	189	322	17	201	62
Kingussie	169	64	-	20	31	8	40
Lochalsh	247	75	4	20	26	13	65
Lochcarron	113	52	1	12	23	-	0
Loch Ness	194	100	1	6	6	-	0
Mid Ross	1362	522	49	99	19	49	49
Nairn	829	298	20	87	29	28	32
North East Lochaber	88	27	-	3	11	-	0
North Skye	609	227	22	67	30	37	55
North West Sutherland	241	41	1	19	46	2	11
Peninsula	130	46	-	18	39	1	6
Rural Nairn	93	49	1	4	8	-	0
South Lochaber	292	86	-	38	44	3	8
South Skye	243	87	8	25	29	11	44
Tain	781	158	5	65	45	20	31
Tomatin	25	22	-	-	-	-	0
Ullapool	183	89	2	25	28	8	32
West Caithness	1417	236	4	153	65	18	12
West Lochaber	171	50	-	16	32	1	6
TOTAL	19817	6799	465	1678	25	601	36

2.4.2   This chart gives an overall view of relative housing supply / demand and pressure. It shows that in most areas of Highland, demand for housing far exceeds supply. A low percentage of people housed in comparison to the number of people seeking housing in an area is an indicator of housing pressure.

2.4.3   The proportion of homeless applicants housed has reduced by 4% in 2015/16 with 1678 homeless applicants housed. The proportions of lets to homeless households tends to reflect the general pattern of housing pressure, with a higher proprtion of lets to homeless people in areas of greatest housing pressure.

2.5   Allocations – Points Category

2.5.1   Chart 10 shows the percentage of applicants who have been awarded points for housing need categories contained in the Allocations Policy compared to the percentage of applicants housed with these categories of points.

Chart 10 - Points Catergories

|	Accessible Housing	Care & Support	Need to Reside	Underocc upation	Overcrow ding	Poor Housing condition	Homeless ness
■ % of Applicants	14	2	65	29	22	7	7
■ % Housed	29	5	86	19	27	8	36

2.5.2   This graph shows that in most cases applicants with the greatest housing needs are more likely to be housed.

2.6   Suspended Applications

2.6.1 Chart 11 shows the breakdown by reason for the 245 applications which were suspended from receiving offers at 31 March 2016. The total number of applicants suspended accounts for 4% of all applicants, which is a slight increase from last year although this may be because the total number of applications have reduced this year. Most suspensions result from people being in rent arrears (93) followed by those in interim accommodation (46). This is the third consecutive year that rent arrears have been the most common reason for applicants being suspended. 16 Applicants were suspended following refusal of 2 reasonable offers of housing, which is the second consecutive year we have seen a reduction.

Chart 11 – Reasons for applications being suspended
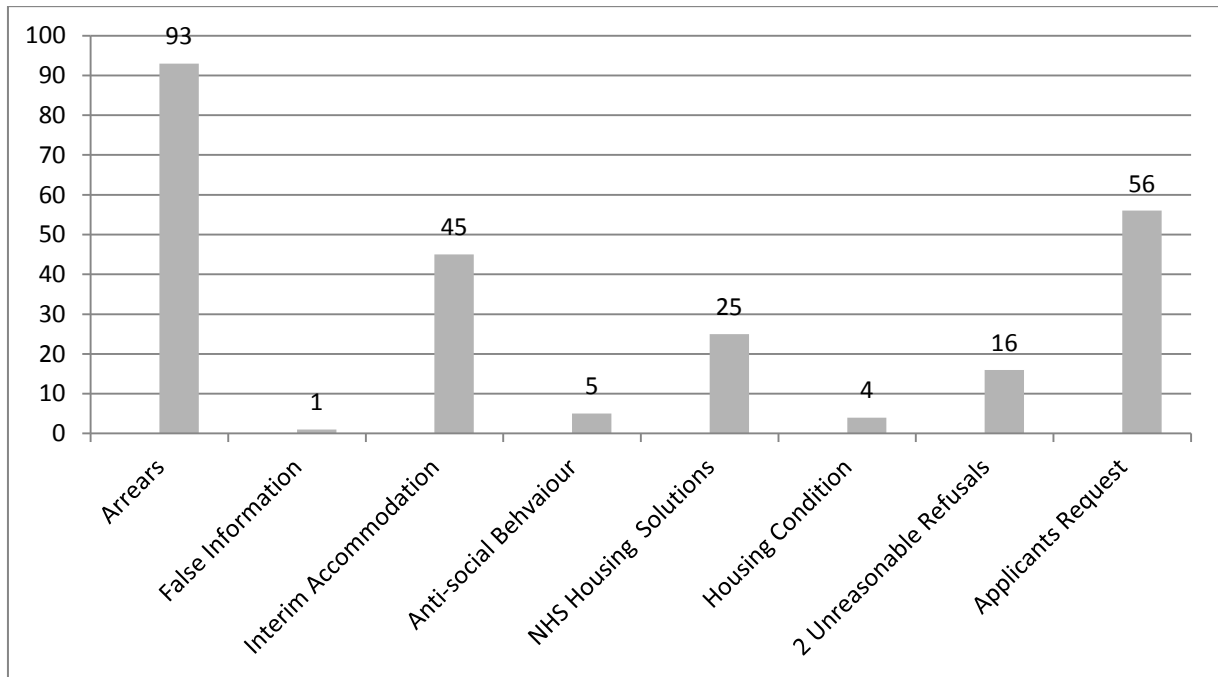
Author: Lyndsey Greene, Housing Policy Officer
Date: 4 August 2016