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| Agenda Item | 5 |
| Report No | HP/12/20 |

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Housing & Property

Date: 9 September 2020

Report Title: Annual Monitoring Report 2019/2020: Highland Housing Register Allocations

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the annual performance review of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Policy for 2019/2020. It illustrates the need for social rented housing and describes how it is being met. It updates on the context, the Policy review and associated consultation.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to: -

- **Note** the information contained in the Annual Monitoring Report on housing allocations which demonstrates that the policy is achieving its objectives; and
- **Note** the process for consulting on proposed changes to the Mutual Exchanges Policy and the Allocation Policy.

3 Implications

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

3.2 **Legal:** The initial review of the Allocation Policy has confirmed that it is compliant with legislation.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural):** Quality, low-cost affordable housing is key driver for reducing and preventing poverty. The Allocation Policy enables equitable access based on evidence of each applicant's need for housing. An Equalities Impact Assessment is informing the Policy review. The Allocation Policy seeks to address rural issues by prioritising through the 'Need to Reside' mechanism.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever:** No implications arising from this report.

- 3.5 **Gaelic:** Housing applications and related published material about access to housing meet the Council's standards in relation to Gaelic.
- 3.6 **Risk:** There are no specific implications arising from this report.

4 Background

- 4.1 This annual report on Highland Housing Register activity supports policy monitoring, illustrates pressures and indicates where changes may be needed. It helps to raise awareness of how the process operates, provides transparency and contributes to highlighting the importance of affordable housing in supporting strong communities and local economies.
- 4.2 Social rented housing provides affordable homes for over 20,000 households across Highland. Compared to Scotland, Highland has proportionally less social rented housing: 18% compared to 23% (8th lowest in Scotland).
- 4.3 The process for allocating social rented housing is bound by legal duties and informed by statutory guidance, including from the: Housing (Scotland) Act 1987; Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 and homelessness duties.
- 4.4 The Highland Housing Register (HHR) shared single Allocation Policy and partnership streamlines and simplifies the process of accessing social rented housing in Highland. The analysis and data for 2019/20 is set out in **Appendix 1** and is summarised here.
- 4.5 It should be noted that Caledonia Housing Association formally joined the HHR from 1 April 2020 and details of allocations involving Caledonia will be included in the 2020/21 report.

5 Housing Demand

- 5.1 There were a total of 7,785 'Housing' and 'Transfer' List applications held at the end of 2019/20 compared to 7,890 in 2018/19. Need for affordable housing does not appear to be significantly reducing. 72% of these applicants are looking to move as 'new' (not transferring) tenants. They are mostly privately renting or living with family. Almost 1,000 households are living in temporary 'homeless' accommodation or are 'homeless at home'. Many of these homeless households, particularly in Inverness, are young people or families with children.
- 5.2 The continuing need for smaller sized properties is clear. Half of all applicants are single people and only 10% are couples. Four of 10 applicants are families. This varies across Highland.
- 5.3 The highest demand for housing in terms of the number of applications remains Inverness (where 39% of all applicants want to be housed), followed by Ross and Cromarty (20%) and Lochaber (12%).
- 5.4 However, whilst around 4 out of 10 applicants are seeking housing in the Inverness area, the lack of housing availability means that less than 3 out of 10 (30%) lets are made there.

- 5.5 The pressure on housing varies across Highland. This means that applicants whose need for housing is less acute are able to receive offers of housing more quickly in some areas than applicants with more acute housing needs in other areas. Analysis of the number applying for each house being let indicates that the pressure on social rented housing is greatest in Nairn, followed by, respectively, Badenoch and Strathspey, Inverness and Mid Ross. Housing pressure in those four areas is far greater than the Highland average. Pressures also vary significantly across communities within areas for example within the communities of Aviemore and West Lochaber. It continues to be relatively easier to access affordable housing in Caithness and in areas of Sutherland.
- 5.6 Information and advice are available to help applicants maximise their likelihood of an offer. There are indications that there would be benefits in increasing the promotion of the other options such as: low cost homeownership; mid-market rent and private renting. More promotion of Mutual Exchanges is taking place to help tenants looking to move and a review of the mutual exchange policy is detailed at section 7 of this report.

6 Meeting Demand

- 6.1 Across Highland, 1,800 households were housed in 2019/20. The increase year-on-year is a result of the new build programme. It should be noted that around 25% of offers were refused and officers are analysing the reasons for this.
- 6.2 The majority of lets continue to be into Council housing (62% of lets), followed by Albyn HS (21%); Cairn HA (7%); Lochaber HA (4%); Lochalsh & Skye HA (3%) and Pentland HA (3%).
- 6.3 Social rented housing providers have a legal duty to give a 'reasonable preference' to priority groups when allocating housing. This includes households who have nowhere safe and secure that they can reasonably stay and so are homeless, and households who are living under unsatisfactory conditions and who have unmet housing needs.
- 6.4 The HHR partners are continuing to meet their duties and house households who are homeless. Across Highland 718 lets, 39% of all lets went to households with points which reflected their homeless status. Although this is similar to previous years, applications show that the number of households becoming homeless is increasing.
- 6.5 In areas where there is a greater lack of housing homeless points play a more significant role in leading to a let. For example, 55% of all Inverness areas lets were to homeless households (excluding transfers, this equates to 75% of 'Housing List' lets).
- 6.6 Across each of the different areas, all the Highland Housing Register landlords house a similar proportion of homeless households. This demonstrates the important role of Highland's housing associations in meeting the wide range of social housing needs including homelessness.
- 6.7 Analysis of the proportion of lets to the other various housing needs groups, compared to demand from applicants with those needs, shows that the HHR Allocations Policy is largely meeting its objectives to provide housing to those with the greatest needs. A quarter of those who were housed had been living in housing which was unsuitable due to their health and social care needs. A quarter had been living in overcrowded housing.

- 6.8 As well as approaches directly from applicants, HHR partners are committed to assisting with other policy priorities. Twenty-five households were helped to move into their first 'independent living' tenancy, many via our Protocol with NHS Highland, as they have complex continuing health care and support needs. Nineteen care experienced young people were housed through the Highland Protocol which supports our Corporate Parenting commitments and duties.
- 6.9 Over 8 out of 10 applicants housed had additional points which recognised they had a particular 'Need to Reside' in that community because either because they work or are already established there; or are providing or receiving family care or support.
- 6.10 We monitor equalities to make sure we are providing equality of access and no discrimination. In line with the previous year, 76% of applicants described themselves as Scottish. This group accounted for 79% of those housed applicants; 7% of lets went to non-British/White households; and around 3% of lets went to other ethnic minorities. The proportion of lets to households describing themselves as disabled matched the proportion of applicants doing so (18% of lets and applicants).

7 Review of the Mutual Exchange Policy

- 7.1 Mutual Exchanges enable tenants to swap with other tenants. The Policy aim is to give tenants an alternative option for resolving their housing related issues. Last year, 178 households moved into a Highland Housing Register tenancy through a Mutual Exchange. The exchange option is promoted to tenants looking for a housing transfer.
- 7.2 Legislation recognises that the right to exchange should be balanced with our duty to prioritise those with the greatest need for social housing and make best of use of limited resources. Landlords have a right to refuse requests if their grounds for doing so are reasonable.
- 7.3 A policy review is underway to consider the length of residence criteria and grounds for refusing a request. Tenants and applicants will be consulted on this in the coming months as part of the HHR Allocation Policy consultation. Committee will be asked to consider the consultation feedback and policy proposals in due course.

8 Review of Highland Housing Register Allocation Policy

- 8.1 The Highland Housing Register Policy review is underway to take account of: new legislation arising from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014; changes in the national and local policy context; Highland's Rapid Rehousing Plan commitment to significantly reduce homelessness; and to ensure that the process delivers the objectives agreed by the Partnership.
- 8.2 The policy review has focused on potential changes to ensure we are allocating to applicants in the greatest housing need. This includes:-
- Ensuring that the needs of victims of domestic abuse are being addressed in line with best practice;
 - Evaluating the impact of "need to reside points" in line with current legislation and guidance;
 - Ensuring that our accessible housing process meets the needs of people who require specialist accommodation and;
 - Reviewing the points allocated for different housing needs.

8.3 One of the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 is a legal duty on social landlords to consult with service users on proposed amendments to allocation policies. Plans are being developed to consult on proposed changes with tenants, applicants, community representatives and partners in the coming months. This will involve a well-promoted and widely accessible online survey (with a paper-based option for those without digital access). A Member seminar will also be arranged to enable discussion on the issues and options for policy change prior to a further report to Committee to consider changes to policy.

9 Conclusion

9.1 Recent events have highlighted the importance of having somewhere safe, secure and comfortable to live. Social rented housing plays an important role in supporting good health, strong communities and local economies. This report aims to help to support policy transparency, good communication and understanding. The analysis and data in **Appendix 1** illustrate that whilst Highland Housing Register activity continues to play an important role in providing for a wide range of households, in many communities it can be particularly challenging to access social rented housing.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing

Date: 21 August 2020

Author: Hilary Parkey - Housing Policy Officer

Highland Housing Register Monitoring Report 2019-20

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report contains monitoring information and commentary on the operation of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocation Policy during 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020. The analysis helps to identify possible improvements to meeting housing needs and aspirations. It looks at who is applying; assesses scope for meeting needs and then indicates how the different housing needs are being met.
- 1.2 The Housing Register and allocations from it are required to comply with the various Housing (Scotland) Acts (1987, 2001 and 2014), homelessness duties and statutory guidance.
- 1.3 The aims of the [Highland Housing Register \(HHR\) Allocations 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 partners 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 inform the Highland Council's planning processes.
- 1.4 The figures relate to the HHR partners i.e. Albyn Housing Society, Cairn Housing Association, Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association, Lochaber Housing Association, Pentland Housing Association and the Highland Council. Caledonia Housing Association formally became an HHR partner from 1 April 2020.
- 1.5 In terms of the local context, the HHR Policy operates across a variety of housing markets and communities. Following a higher than national average population increase, in total in Highland, around 236,000 individuals live in 109,000 households. There are around 20,800 social rented properties (2018) in total - 18% of Highland's total housing. This proportion is significantly lower than the national average (23%) and 8th lowest in Scotland. Supply is steadily increasing. Table 1 sets out stock numbers. It shows that in 2019/20, another 351 properties were added to be used as permanent or temporary social rented accommodation.

Table 1 - Social Rented Housing Supply by HHR Landlord

| Landlord | New Supply (completions 19/20) | | | Number of Social Rented Properties | Turnover Rate (excl temp. & unlet voids; includes new) |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------------------------|---|
| | HHR Rent | LCHO | Mid-Market Rent | | |
| Albyn HS | 154 | 18 | 27 | 3,069 | 12% |
| Cairn HA | 8 | | | 1,618 | 8% |
| Lochaber HA | 24 | 4 | | 669 | 11% |
| Lochalsh & Skye HA | 30 | | | 626 | 10% |
| Pentland HA | | | | 486 | 11% |
| Highland Council | 134 | 13 | 12 (HHA*) | 13,894 | 8% |
| TOTAL | 351 | 35 | 39 | 20,362 | 9% |

*HHA = Highland Housing Alliance. Excludes 1 Rural Homeownership Grant (RHOG)

1.6 Differences in supply means that it is important for applicants to understand that their specific choices affect their likelihood of being made an offer. They are encouraged to use a web-based tool (Housing Prospects) to understand availability in different communities and encourage them to maximise their choices. The tool is held here:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/925/council_housing/244/apply_for_a_house/5

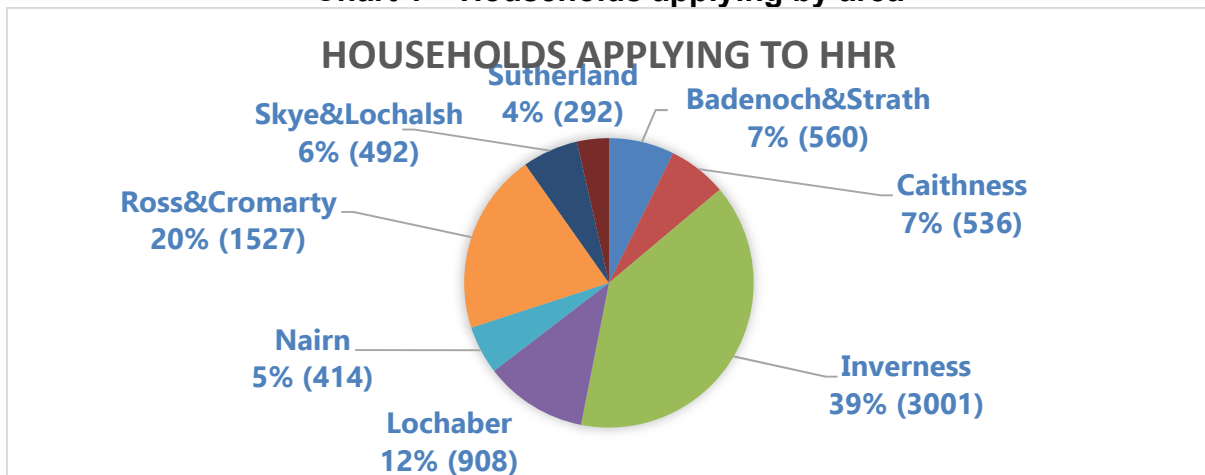
1.7 Social landlords are required to prioritise households with 'unmet' housing needs (i.e. they unable to meet their own needs). Other households can benefit from the increasing supply of alternative options: mid-market renting; and low-cost home-ownership (e.g. via open market purchase or new build shared equity models). The HHR partners' websites include details on these options and officers can advise. HHR applicants have priority access to alternative options.

2 Applications

2.1 The number of households applying for housing is 7,785 which is a decrease from 7,890 in 2018/19. Need for affordable housing does not appear to be significantly reducing. Around 1 in 4 applicants (28%, 2,182) are existing HHR tenants applying for a 'Transfer List' move. Most households are applying to the 'Housing List' looking to move in as 'new' tenants (72%, 5,603). Most of these are privately renting or lodging with friends (over a third); around 1 in 4 are living with parents; around 1 in 8 are in temporary 'homeless' accommodation and around 1 in 10 are currently home-owners.

2.2 Most applicants (39%, 3,001 households) are looking to be housed in Inverness followed by Ross and Cromarty (20%, 1,527 households), then Lochaber, (12%, 908). Broadly similar numbers of households are seeking housing in Badenoch & Strathspey, Caithness, Nairn and Skye & Lochalsh. Chart 1 illustrates this split across Highland.

Chart 1 – Households applying by area



2.3 Table 2 sets out how many applicants are waiting for each property size. The need for small properties is clear. Half of all HHR applicants are single people; only 10% are couples whilst 40% are families. There has been a slight decrease in the number of families awaiting housing. This pressure on smaller properties is greater in some areas – for example in Skye & Lochalsh 71% of applicants require only one bedroom.

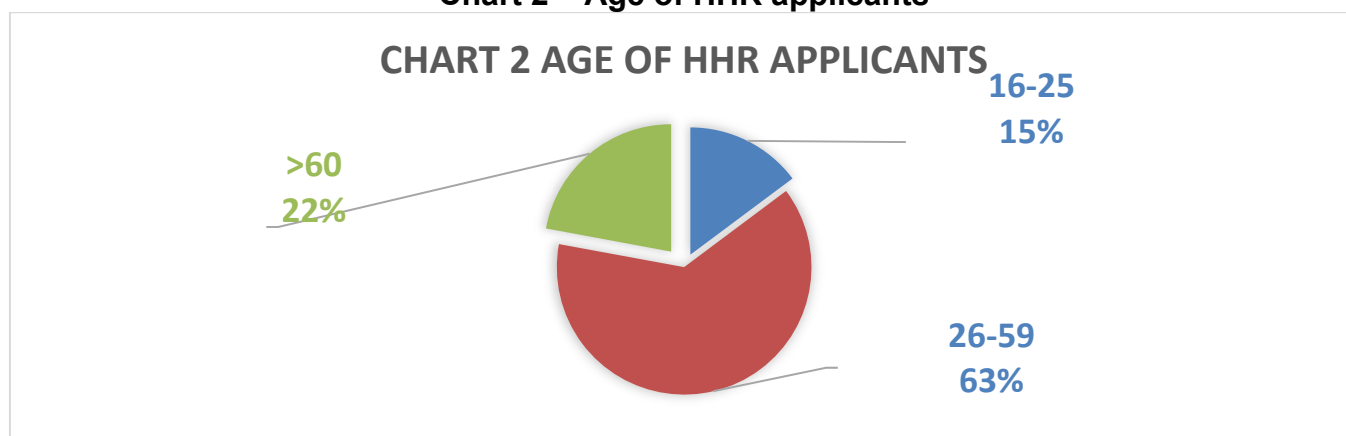
Table 2 - Number of Bedrooms Applicants Require by Area (and percentage of applicants in that area who require each size)

| Area | 1 | % | 2 | % | | 3 | % | 4 | % | 5+ | % | Apps |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|--|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Badenoch& Strathspey | 331 | 59% | 103 | 18% | | 86 | 15% | 28 | 5% | 6 | 1% | 560 |
| Caithness | 345 | 64% | 113 | 21% | | 42 | 8% | 20 | 4% | 6 | 1% | 536 |
| Inverness | 1724 | 57% | 686 | 23% | | 402 | 13% | 134 | 4% | 46 | 2% | 3001 |
| Lochaber | 523 | 58% | 216 | 24% | | 98 | 11% | 47 | 5% | 5 | 1% | 908 |
| Nairn | 244 | 59% | 78 | 19% | | 52 | 13% | 23 | 6% | 9 | 2% | 414 |
| Ross& Cromarty | 905 | 59% | 322 | 21% | | 194 | 13% | 78 | 5% | 26 | 2% | 1527 |
| Skye& Lochalsh | 347 | 71% | 88 | 18% | | 35 | 7% | 14 | 3% | 4 | 1% | 492 |
| Sutherland | 192 | 66% | 48 | 16% | | 30 | 10% | 8 | 3% | 2 | 1% | 292 |
| Highland | 4611 | 60% | 1654 | 21% | | 939 | 12% | 352 | 5% | 104 | 1% | 7730 |

Applications counted in their '1st preference' area. 55 applications are incomplete pending this detail

2.4 Chart 2 illustrates the different age groups of HHR applicants. The bulk of applicants are aged between 25 and 60 (62%) with 1 in 5 applicants (22%) aged over 60 years. Just over half of those over 60 years old were tenants looking to transfer.

Chart 2 – Age of HHR applicants



2.5 Young applicants aged 16-25 are far more likely than other age groups to be in homeless accommodation (17% of young applicants). Their average age is 21; half are young women; around 1 in 5 (20%) have children. The extent of homelessness amongst young people in Inverness is clear with over 1 in 4 young applicants (28%) living in temporary homeless housing. Proportionally in Skye young applicants were more likely than other areas to be homeless at home (12% of under 25s).

Table 3 - Applicants Aged 16-25 Showing Current Circumstances

| Current Tenure | Couple | Family | Single | Total | % |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
| Living with parents/relatives/ | 73 | 92 | 350 | 525 | 43 |
| Temporary homeless accommodation | 20 | 40 | 149 | 210 | 17 |
| A tenant of an HHR landlord | 9 | 116 | 26 | 153 | 13 |
| Tenant of private landlord | 20 | 49 | 33 | 103 | 8 |
| Living or lodging with friends | 5 | 7 | 41 | 56 | 5 |
| Homeless at home | 2 | 7 | 20 | 29 | 2 |
| Hostel / supported accommodation | | 3 | 29 | 33 | 3 |
| Other housing association / council | 3 | 15 | 5 | 26 | 2 |
| Residential care/throughcare | | 1 | 12 | 13 | 1 |
| Tied tenant | 2 | 1 | 8 | 12 | 1 |
| Tenant of a property leased by council | 2 | 7 | 1 | 10 | 1 |
| Living in caravan | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 0 |
| Long term stay in hospital | | | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Owner occupier/shared owner | | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 |
| Prison | | | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Total Each Household Type 16-25yrs | 137 | 342 | 687 | 1222 | 100 |
| Percentage of Household Type | 11 | 28 | 56 | 100 | |

(some applicants who are in supported accommodation are also care leavers)

- 2.6 Many applicants' express interest in alternative re-housing options. These options may present a better opportunity to access housing in a preferred community. There is value in assisting applicants with accessing these options and assessing outcomes.

Table 4 – Alternative housing options

| Alternative Housing Options | No. Applicants Expressing Interest |
|---|---|
| Mutual exchange | 1442 |
| Mid-market rent (MMR) | 1498 |
| Renting a private property | 1491 |
| Buying a house or flat (e.g. via Low Cost Home Own) | 423 |
| Building own home with a rural home ownership grant | 389 |
| Having home adapted to meet your daily living needs | 279 |

- 2.7.1 In 2019-20, 150 applications were suspended from receiving offers: 66 were due to the applicant owing money to an HHR landlord and not having set up or maintained an arrangement to re-pay it; 10 were due to applicants refusing two reasonable offers of housing and 43 were at the applicant's request.

Pressures Across Highland

- 2.8 Table 5 below indicates relative pressure on housing by illustrating how many '1st choice' applicants there are, notionally, for each house let. It shows that the pressure in Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey, Inverness and Mid Ross is greater than the Highland average. In Nairn, for every let, there are 8 applicants compared to a Highland average of 4 applicants per let.

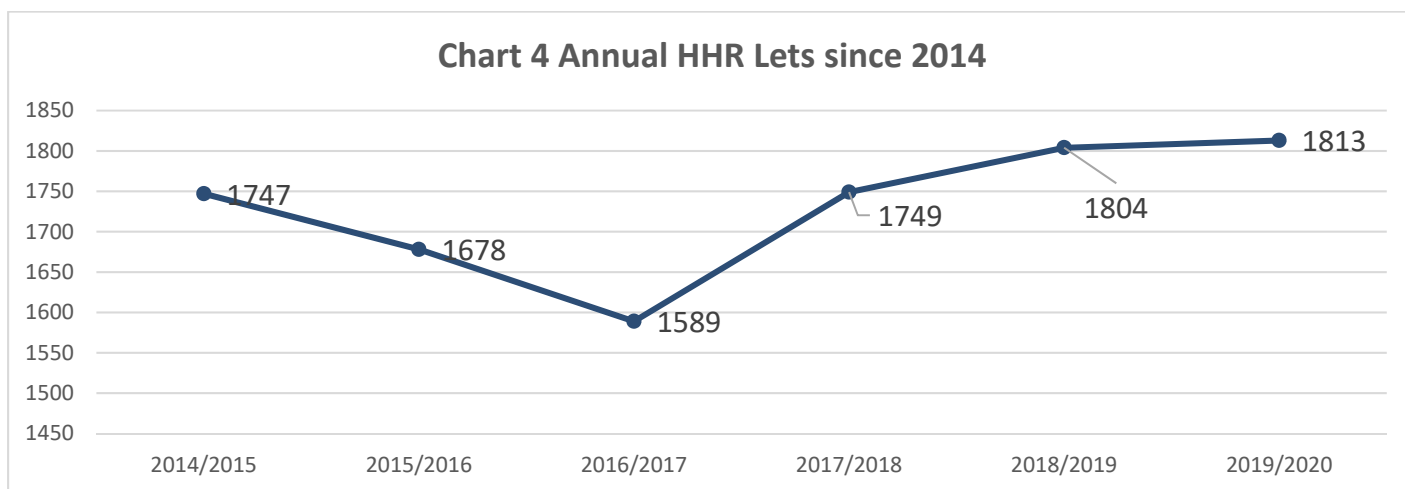
Table 5 - Relative Pressure – 1st Choice HHR Applicants per HHR Let 2019/20

| Area | Lets During Year | 1 st Choice applicants* | Pressure – applicants per let |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Badenoch & Strathspey | 80 | 560 | 7.0 |
| Caithness | 328 | 536 | 1.6 |
| Inverness | 486 | 3,001 | 6.2 |
| Lochaber | 206 | 908 | 4.3 |
| Nairn | 49 | 414 | 8.4 |
| East Ross | 243 | 604 | 2.5 |
| Mid Ross | 121 | 725 | 6.0 |
| West Ross | 84 | 198 | 2.4 |
| Skye & Lochalsh | 95 | 492 | 5.2 |
| Sutherland | 121 | 292 | 2.4 |
| Highland | 1,813 | 7,730 | 4.3 |

*Note – 55 applications were incomplete and pending this detail

3. Allocations

3.1 There has been a slight rise in letting activity – in total, 1,813 households were given a new home via the HHR. Chart 4 shows that the trend is continuing to increase which is likely to be due to the continuing impact of the new build development programme. This also enables HHR partners to provide more affordable, quality self-contained temporary accommodation for those who find themselves homeless. Temporary lets are **not** reflected in Chart 4.



3.2 Mutual Exchanges can help tenants to meet their needs and aspirations to move (especially if their points are low). Another 178 households used this method to move into an HHR tenancy (either from within Highland or outwith), slightly fewer than previously. Most were in Inverness.

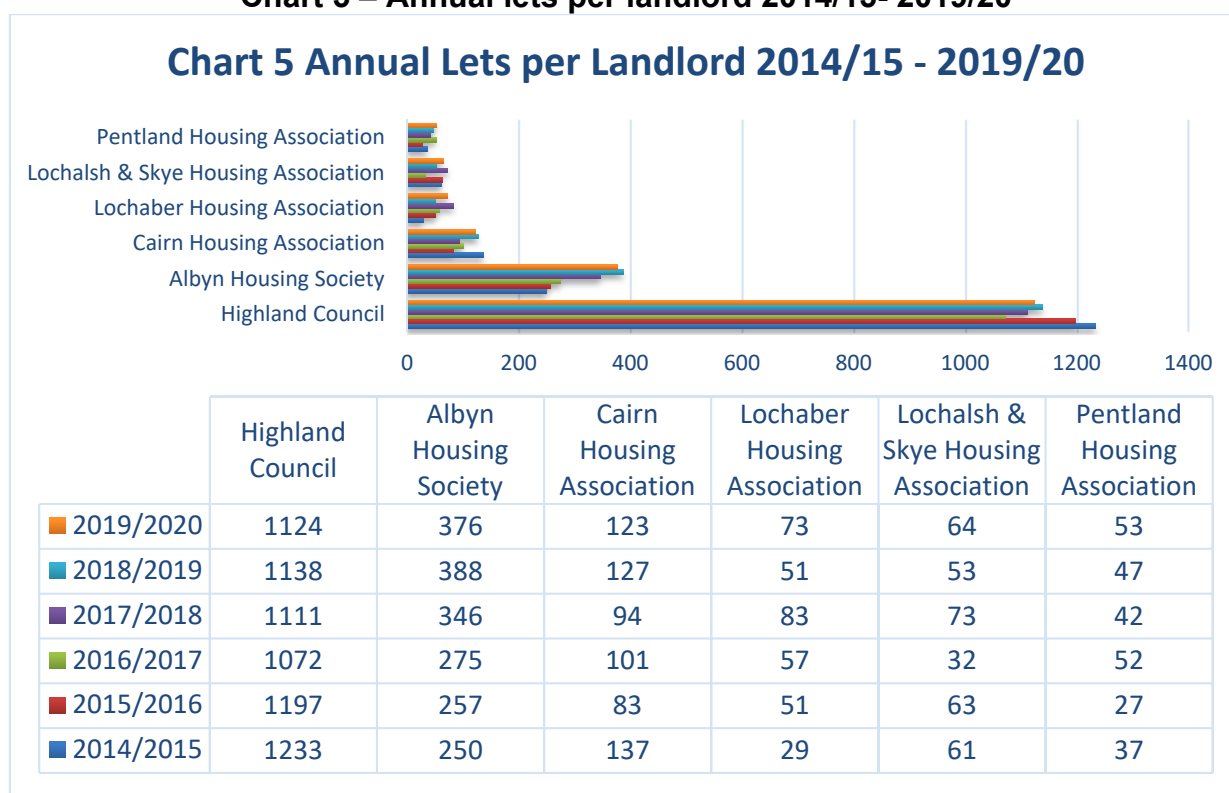
3.3 Table 5 shows that whilst around 4 out of 10 (39%) applicants are seeking housing in Inverness, the lack of supply means that less than 3 out of 10 (27%) lets are made in Inverness. This contrasts with Caithness which accounts for nearly 1 in 5 (18%) of Highland's lets but only 7% of applicants.

Table 5 - Households Applying to Live in an Area Compared to Lets 2019/20

| | Applicants | Percentage of Applicants | Lets | Percentage of Lets |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Badenoch & Strathspey | 542 | 7 | 80 | 4 |
| Caithness | 484 | 7 | 328 | 18 |
| Inverness | 2,901 | 39 | 486 | 27 |
| Lochaber | 850 | 11 | 206 | 11 |
| Nairn | 399 | 5 | 49 | 3 |
| East Ross | 585 | 8 | 243 | 13 |
| Mid Ross | 712 | 10 | 121 | 7 |
| West Ross | 200 | 3 | 84 | 5 |
| Skye | 460 | 6 | 95 | 5 |
| Sutherland | 263 | 4 | 121 | 7 |
| Highland | 7,396 | 100% | 1,813 | 100% |

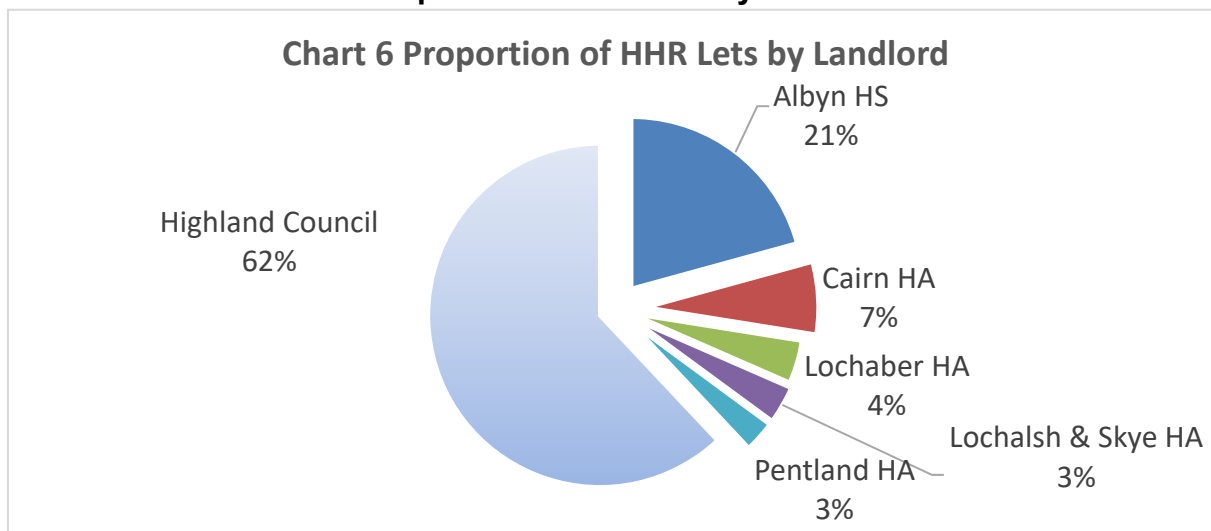
3.4 Chart 5 illustrates the trend in HHR lets by each landlord. It shows that there is some minimal change in availability of housing. Fluctuations are likely mainly due to impact of new builds.

Chart 5 – Annual lets per landlord 2014/15- 2019/20



3.5 Chart 6 shows the proportion of applicants housed by individual HHR Partners. These are consistent with previous years. Allocations to Council houses accounted for 1,124 (62%) of all lets which is a slight 1% decrease on the previous year.

Chart 6 – Proportion of HHR lets by landlord 2019/20



- 3.6 Participating landlords (Trust Housing, Blackwood Homes, Hanover Housing and Key Housing) have around 750 social rented properties. Whilst these landlords may seek nominations from the Highland Housing Register (HHR), several hold their own lists which they allocate directly from. HHR officers are encouraged to assist applicants to apply direct to these. In 2019/20, 15 HHR applicants were housed by these landlords via HHR nominations.
- 3.7 Allocating housing to a transferring tenant is a useful tool for freeing up family housing or single person 'starter' housing. Across Highland, the trends in this split were maintained with the majority of lets to those on the Housing List (73%, 1,321) and just over a quarter (27%, 492) going to transferring tenants.

3.8 Homelessness

Social housing landlords are legally required to give reasonable preference to households who have particular needs including those in greatest housing need. Table 6 provides detail on the number of households in each area who have points reflecting that they have nowhere safe and secure that they can reasonably stay in (i.e. homeless). The vast majority (758 households) are living in temporary homeless accommodation. Almost 100 households are 'homeless at home'.

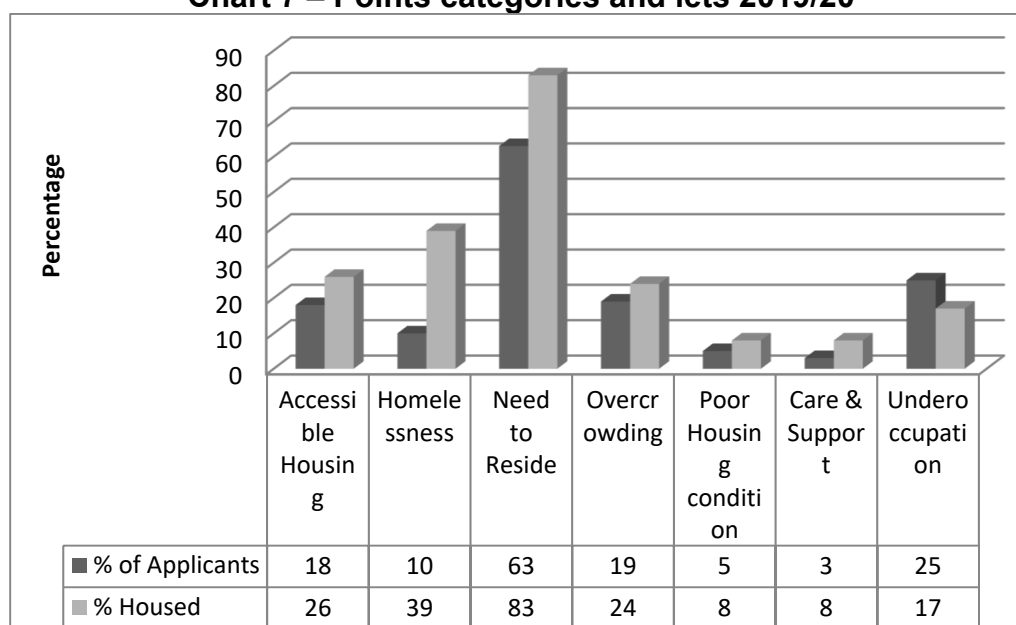
Detailed analysis shows that all the HHR landlords play a very important and equally significant role in meeting the needs of households are homeless. The proportion of lets by each landlord in the different areas to homeless households is broadly similar. Where there are variations this is likely due to size e.g. some have higher proportions of 1 bed housing.

Table 6 - Homeless Lets as a Percentage of All (and Housing List applicant) Lets

| | Number of Apps with Homeless Points (June '20) | Percentage of Housing List Apps | All HHR Lets 19-20 | Lets to Homeless Households | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | | | No. of Lets to Apps with Homeless Points | Percentage of Housing & Transfer Lets | Percentage of Housing List Lets only |
| Badenoch & Strathspey | 52 | 11% | 80 | 38 | 48% | 69% |
| Caithness | 16 | 5% | 328 | 37 | 11% | 16% |
| Inverness | 409 | 18% | 490 | 271 | 55% | 77% |
| Lochaber | 58 | 8% | 206 | 87 | 42% | 53% |
| Nairn | 45 | 15% | 50 | 26 | 52% | 68% |
| East Ross & Cromarty | 58 | 15% | 246 | 113 | 46% | 63% |
| Mid Ross & Cromarty | 132 | 29% | 206 | 84 | 41% | 60% |
| Skye & Lochalsh | 76 | 19% | 95 | 43 | 45% | 63% |
| Sutherland | 12 | 5% | 121 | 19 | 16% | 19% |
| Total Highland | 858 | 15% | 1822 | 718 | 39% | 54% |

3.9 Chart 7 shows the percentage of applicants awarded points for HHR's housing need categories compared to the percentage housed with these points. It shows, in line with HHR Policy objectives, that generally applicants who, due to their circumstances, have the greatest need for re-housing are more likely to be housed.

Chart 7 – Points categories and lets 2019/20



3.10 Across Highland, over 8 out of 10 of those housed had additional points which recognised their 'need to reside' in the community where they were housed. This is because they have already lived there for 12 months; will be, or are, working there; or because of giving or receiving care and support needs (e.g. from family). In areas with more pressure on its housing (i.e. far more applicants than supply), significantly more lets went to those with those types of points – in 5 out of the 8 Highland areas over 90% of those housed (and in one area, Badenoch and Strathspey, all of those housed) had an additional 'Need to Reside' points.

- 3.11 Highland supports the Armed Forces Covenant which recognises the particular needs of these applicants. Currently 37 applicants are or were in the British Armed Forces. This is fewer than the number applying at the same time last year (46). During the year, 8 were housed.
- 3.12 To make sure that there is equality of access we monitor equalities issues. Whilst these questions are not compulsory, responses to these questions have increased. Table 7 shows that 3 out of 4 applicants who completed the form describe themselves as Scottish: 2,568 (76%) applicants and 554 (79%) housed applicants. British (13%) and Other White applicants (8.6%) are the next largest groups. Figures are similar to the previous year.

Table 7 - HHR Demand and Lets by Ethnic origin

| Ethnic Origin | Applications | Housed Applicants |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| (i) (a) White Scottish | 2568 | 594 |
| (i) (b) White Other British / Irish | 433 | 94 |
| (i) (d) White Gypsy/Traveller | 4 | 4 |
| (i) (e) White Polish | 111 | 22 |
| (i) (f) White Other | 178 | 29 |
| (ii) Mixed or Multiple Ethnic | 11 | 7 |
| Other Non-white | 58 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 3363 | 756 |

- 3.13 To ensure equality, information on applicants identifying as disabled is monitored. The Policy appears to be meeting such needs with the same proportion of disabled applicants being housed as applying for housing (18% of lets and demand – 1,374 applicants and 331 lets).

4 Particular Housing Needs

- 4.1 As well as approaches directly from applicants, HHR partners have a range of competing policy priorities to balance. During the year 25 households were helped to move into their first independent living tenancy, most through the protocol with NHS Highland for people with complex care and support needs. A further 19 young people were housed in their first tenancy through the Care Leavers Protocol. Most of these (11) were housed in Inverness.
- 4.2 Table 8 shows the number of applicants who require 'wheelchair-user' housing or 'level access' housing (i.e. housing on one level which is suitable for people with significant mobility needs). The table also shows how many of those properties were let over the year. It highlights that there is a relatively large unmet need - over 100 applicants require housing suitable for wheelchair users. Over half have an urgent need to move from very unsuitable housing.
- 4.3 Across Highland, 28 households, 2% of lets, who required wheelchair housing had their needs met. A number of these properties were newly built. Across Highland, the proportion of lets to wheelchair housing generally reflected the proportion of this type of demand in an area.
- 4.4 Many households with mobility needs are waiting to be housed more suitably in 'level access' housing – 620 applicants across Highland (8% of all applicants). This proportion is higher at 10% of applicants in Inverness, Mid & West Ross, Caithness and Sutherland and 12% in East Ross. On average 12% of lets went to applicants who required level access housing – this proportion was higher in Mid & West Ross (20% of lets) and Badenoch & Strathspey (18%) of lets. This reflects stock availability and may be affected by new build activity (rather than on-going turnover).

4.4.1 There are many applicants who require housing with specialist design features. Figures highlight that ongoing investment in specially designed housing is required. Much of this demand is in the Inner Moray Firth. This highlights the need to overcome supply issues; make best use of housing where specialist features are not being used by the tenant and support applicants to access a wider range of option / housing solutions.

Table 8 - Demand & Lets for Wheelchair & Level Access Housing

| | Apps Requiring Wheelchair housing | Lets to Wheelchair applicants | Apps Requiring Level Access | Lets to Apps Requiring Level Access |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Badenoch & Strath. | 4 | 1 | 31 | 14 |
| Caithness | 2 | 1 | 49 | 17 |
| Inverness | 44 | 10 | 239 | 62 |
| Lochaber | 12 | 2 | 50 | 26 |
| Nairn | 9 | 1 | 40 | 7 |
| Ross & C. East | 21 | 6 | 68 | 21 |
| Mid & West Ross | 16 | 3 | 92 | 40 |
| Skye & Lochalsh | 4 | 1 | 25 | 8 |
| Sutherland | 3 | 3 | 26 | 15 |
| Highland | 115 | 28 | 620 | 210 |

4.4.2 There were 58 lets into Council sheltered housing in the year. Of these 29% were HHR transferring tenants; 28% homeless lets and 43% (four out of 10) were from the general list. Sheltered housing continues to play an important role in helping people with mobility or other health needs whose current housing is unsuitable is clear. For example, 8 out of 10 sheltered housing lets were to applicants with 'accessible housing' (i.e. health / medical rehousing priority) points. Of the 58 lets, 10 households had an urgent need to move due to their health-related housing issues. Good communication and joint working arrangements with local health and social care teams can help to make sure that sheltered housing is best used to meet individuals and communities needs and relieve pressures on other services.

4.5 Analysis suggests that there would be value in ensuring that the Allocation Policy prioritises households who have few options and need help to secure housing which is suitable for their health or mobility needs. The increase in alternative options including low cost ownership may provide greater opportunities for households whose needs are changing as they age.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Social rented housing plays an important role in supporting good health, strong communities and local economies. This analysis and data illustrate that Highland Housing Register activity continues to play an important role in providing for a wide range of households. Nonetheless in many communities, households will find it particularly challenging to access social rented housing which meets their needs.

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