Tavistock Council Housing

Urban and Rural

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In 1911, after over 450 years, the Bedford influence on Tavistock town came to an end when the family sold most of their holdings in the area.

In the 1920s, Tavistock had two councils: Tavistock Urban District Council (UDC) and Tavistock Rural District Council (RDC). Tavistock UDC dealt with matters in and around Tavistock, whereas Tavistock RDC was involved with the villages outside of the town.

Tavistock UDC

In 1919, Tavistock UDC met many times to discuss the purchase of a site for their new housing scheme. They announced on 5 September 1919 that they would be purchasing a site from a Mr G. Spear for £875 for the erection of houses for the working classes in Whitchurch Road, Tavistock. Their committee resolved to ask the Ministry of Health for sanction to be able to borrow £900 to purchase this field and their meeting agreed that Mr Drewett was to be the architect.[1]

In March 1920, Mr Drewett produced his plans for fifty houses, which had been approved by the Ministry of Health. Each house was to have a living room, a parlour, three bedrooms, and outhouses. The meeting decided it was now time to ask for tenders.[2]

Work started on building these houses, but by July 1921 only thirty-four had been completed and there was another sixteen to be built. The Finance Committee announced it would be making an application to the Ministry of Health for sanction to borrow £65,000 in order to proceed with the housing scheme.[3]

In December of that year, the council met to discuss what to charge for rents in these new houses. It was agreed that the rents should be 8s 6d per week for parlour houses and 7s for non-parlour houses.[4]

At a meeting in March 1922, Mr J. Snow said that the Ministry of Health had suggested that the rents of houses provided under the housing scheme should be 9s and 8s respectively. The council resolved to adhere to their original proposition to charge 8s a week rent for parlour

[1] *Western Times*, 5 September 1919.
[2] *Western Morning News*, 3 March 1920.
[3] *Western Times*, 14 September 1920.
[4] *Western Morning News*, 7 December 1921.

houses and 6s 6d for non-parlour houses, as in Tavistock some working men with families were only receiving 32s a week. [5]

Over the next couple of years, Tavistock UDC realised that there were more demands for council housing than they had houses for. On 4 December 1924 the need of further housing accommodation at Tavistock was discussed by the Tavistock UDC, when a resolution was adopted authorising the Sanitary Committee to submit a scheme as soon as possible. Mr J. Snow said this need was now 'very real and urgent'.[6] It was also believed that new council housing would be a burden to Tavistock ratepayers.

Reporting in January 1925, Mr R. Tucker said now that the whole scheme was finished, the truth was the houses had cost £1,100 each, with a net loss of £45 per house, leaving nothing for depreciation. He hoped that any future scheme the council proposed would be guided by their past experience.[7]

One of Tavistock UDC's major problems was the difficulty in finding enough land and sites to build houses. On 5 August 1925, Mr Snow said that he had received letters from two people, whom had been asked if the council could buy some of their land, refusing to part with it: 'the Kelly College trustees, Miss Dunn and the Rev Mr Veale respectively, who intimated that they did not wish to part with the land owned by them for housing sites'.[8]

On 4 February 1925, the Sanitary Committee told the Tavistock UDC that they should now be chiefly concerned with the non-parlour houses. It was proposed that they should undertake the erection of fifty out of the seventy houses, to be rented or sold on an instalment principle:

> The grant-in-aid of £9 a year for 40 years under the conditions of the 1924 Act, or of £6 a year for 20 years under the conditions of the 1923 Act, would be obtained as soon as the final sanction was secured that 12 houses should be put in hand to be completed in two years, 18 more to be completed in three years and the remaining 20 within four years, so that by the year 1929 the whole of the 50 houses undertaken by the Council, in addition to the 20 delegated to private enterprise, would be completed.
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> But that if they wished to carry the whole of their building programme to a successful issue, the Properties Committee would have to come to their aid with their plan for extending the water area. For the initial cost of £600 the economic rent would be, under the 1924 Act, 8s 6d, and under the 1923 Act 11s 6d, with rates in addition in each case.[9]

At the same meeting, Tavistock's surveyor reported that:

> 51 houses had either been condemned, or were likely to be condemned in the near future. In addition, they had on their waiting list of applicants for Trelake Park, 28 residents and nine non-residents in Tavistock. There were also 15 non-residents wishing to build houses on subsidy. Even if they eliminated non-residents and residents who appeared among the 51, they would still get a total of at least 70 and that was the number they proposed to return in

[5] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 9 March 1922.
[6] *Western Morning News*, 4 December 1924.
[7] *Western Morning News*, 7 January 1925.
[8] *Western Morning News*, 5 August 1925.
[9] *Western Morning News*, 4 February 1925.

> their minimum requirements – 20 to abate over-crowding and 50 to replace houses unfit, or below a reasonable standard of fitness.[10]

In 1933, Tavistock UDC condemned numbers 1 to 16 Paul's Buildings and 10 to 44 Exeter Street as unfit. Many of the tenants living in Paul's Buildings and Exeter Street in the 1920s moved to either Crelake Park or Witham Park, Whitchurch Road – Tavistock's two biggest building projects.

Callington Road

In the 1920s, Tavistock UDC built a few houses in Callington Road and College Avenue. On 1 October 1927 it was reported that a further thirty-two houses had been built or were in the course of erection at Callington Road, College Avenue and Whitchurch Road, at an approximate cost of £500 each.[11]

College Avenue

On 7 April 1926, Tavistock's medical officer of health reported on the very bad housing conditions in the town, where:

> 18 families of more than four were known to be living in two-roomed cottages or tenements which provided one sleeping apartment. Thirty-seven of the two-roomed and 18 of the three-roomed cottages were of the back-to-back type, and had no means of through ventilation. A number of those were dark, and 62 of the tenement houses required alteration. Four houses were definitely unfit for occupation and 43 others were in such a state of disrepair that they might be considered as unfit also.[12]

At the same meeting, Tavistock UDC decided to ask the district valuer to value the College Avenue site for housing purposes and purchase the site, with the approval of the Ministry of Health.

In September 1927 Tavistock UDC reported they were to charge 7s a week for the council houses at College Avenue.[13]

Crelake Park

There was trouble from the beginning with the build at Crelake Park. In November 1922, at a council meeting, Mr R. Tucker said, 'the place had been rightly named Crelake Park as it seemed to him there was a little lake in all the houses. They leaked very badly and he should like an explanation'. He was told that the clerk had received complaints from the tenants and had written to the architect. The chimneys should be plastered. Mr Gill said things were going

[10] *Western Morning News*, 4 February 1925.
[11] *Western Morning News*, 1 October 1927.
[12] *Western Morning News*, 7 April 1926.
[13] *Western Morning News*, 14 September 1927.

on month after month and meanwhile selected tenants were living in one or two rooms. The council should bring pressure to bear to get the interior finished.[14]

In January 1923, the Ministry of Health inspector wrote to Tavistock UDC suggesting certain repairs. Mr W. T. Gill said they had received a report from no fewer than thirty people who were occupying the houses complaining about water coming in by the bucketful and that they had been compelled to place their articles on the floor.

The medical officer said two of the houses had been found in an awful state. Water was running down to the floors and dropping on to the mantlepiece. One of the tenants had been suffering from rheumatism for weeks because of the damp. It was a serious matter and the question was, who was to blame?[15]

In October 1923 the tenants of Crelake Park had written to Tavistock UDC asking that their rents be reduced in view of their wages being reduced. The council was sympathetic with Mr J. J. Alexander, suggesting that the committee send a letter to the Ministry of Health advocating an all-round reduction of 2s per week on the rent of the houses. (The present charge for the houses was 9s per week for the parlour type and 7s 6d for the non-parlour type. The cost of the rental and rates was 13s per week for the parlour houses and 11s per week for the non-parlour type.) The committee believed there was something in the contention made by the petitioners. He moved the adoption of the recommendation and Mr Folland seconded.

Mr Mitchell said it was very unfair that the tenants should have to pay one-third of their income to keep a roof over their heads. Mr Tucker did not know whether it was within the province of the council not only to recommend the reduction of the rents for the Crelake Park houses but also for all property holders throughout the whole district.[16]

To try and make ends meet, Crelake Park tenants took in lodgers. In May 1924 the question of tenants being allowed lodgers was asked. Mr Alexander said in the case of tenants who had lodgers they were satisfied the tenants' families were so small that they would be able to accommodate them without overcrowding. It was not the business of the council to know what the tenants were boarding their lodgers for. At the same meeting, Mr R. Tucker asked what amount had been expended on repairs to council houses at Crelake Park, from what fund the money was taken and whether such repairs would be considered necessary in buildings so recently erected.[17]

By October 1927, Tavistock UDC had erected fifty houses at Crelake Park under the Addison Scheme, at approximately £1,300 each house. Mr W. J. Folland, a former member of the Tavistock UDC and its Housing Committee, and who was now a member of Torquay Town Council, described Crelake Park in his letter to the *Tavistock Times* as 'a grand garden city. These houses are very pretty and very suitable and a delightful view can be obtained from the

[14] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* , 8 November 1922.
[15] *Western Times*, 12 January 1923.
[16] *Western Morning News*, 4 October 1923.
[17] *Western Morning News*, 8 May 1924.

site.'[18] The rent charged for the Crelake Park houses 'is 8s 6d per week for the parlour type and 7s for those without parlours. The houses now being built are 7s a week.'[19]

In August 1927, there was an allegation made that the contractor for the Tavistock council houses, with the knowledge of the architect, was bound under a subcontract to the gas company, to buy his cookers from them. This was stoutly denied by Mr C. Stapleton, vice-chairman of the Sanitary Committee, and other members of the council said they had heard nothing of the matter. A proposition that twelve houses should be provided for cooking by gas and twelve by coal was submitted by Mr W. B. Alger and carried.[20]

In October 1927, a Mr W. Gulley also built subsidised houses in Parkwood Road.

Witham Park, Whitchurch Road

In January 1927, the council were asking for tenders for the erection of twenty-four working-class houses on the site in Whitchurch Road, that they be built at the lower end of the site and that the road be carried as far as was necessary for the number of houses to be built.[21]

In March 1927, it was resolved at a Tavistock UDC committee meeting that Messrs Kerswill and Son be asked if they were prepared to execute a formal contract to complete at least six houses at the Whitchurch Road site by 30 September 1927 and the remainder by 31 March 1928. This was afterwards confirmed in open council.[22]

In September 1927, Tavistock UDC were to charge 7s a week for the council houses at Whitchurch Road.[23]

On 30 September 1927, Mr J. J. Alexander said that he had discovered in some old papers that the site in Whitchurch Road – on which the council were now building a number of houses at approximate cost of £500 each – was in the fourteenth century called Witham Park. He suggested that they should adopt that name for it now. This was agreed to.[24]

On 7 December 1927, Tavistock UDC decided that the price of plots of land at Witham Park should be fixed at £60 each to encourage private builders. The chairman said he hoped it would be taken into account that if the houses at Witham Park were not built by private enterprise they would be put up by the town and they would be losing £10 or £15 a year extending over a period, instead of an initial loss of £15.[25]

In January 1928, Mr Venning asked how many of the sites offered by the council at Witham Park had been taken up for building houses by private enterprise, He said there were still many

[18] *Western Morning News*, 1 October 1927.
[19] Ibid.
[20] *Western Morning News*, 3 August 1927.
[21] *Western Morning News*, 6 January 1927.
[22] *Western Morning News*, 4 March 1927.
[23] *Western Morning News*, 14 September 1927.
[24] *Western Morning News*, 30 September 1927.
[25] *Western Morning News*, 7 December 1927.

people in Tavistock who badly wanted houses and the sooner some of them got out of the wretched houses they now occupied the better it would be. He was strongly in favour of more houses being built.[26] On 8 February 1928 a new scheme for the erection of sixteen more houses at Witham Park was carried.[27]

On 2 May 1928 there were objections to the housing policy of the Tavistock UDC about the proposed acceptance of a tender for the erection of sixteen houses on the unused portion of the Whitham Park site.[28] The tender of Messrs William and Bishop, Buckfastleigh, amounted to £6,700. It was explained by Mr C. Stapleton, who submitted the recommendation of the Sanitary Committee, that the tender represented a cost of £420 per house, which was considerably lower than the previous tender and justified the action of the council in proceeding steadily with the schemes.

Mr A. E. Wilkins opposed the recommendation, alleging that the eighty houses erected by the council were so expensive that the rents were beyond the means of the average wage earner in Tavistock. The houses had also proved a burden to the ratepayers and he thought that fresh plans should be prepared of a cheaper type.

Mr E. G. Ryall denied a statement by Mr Wilkins that the council had done nothing towards dealing with slum property. He contended that the right sort of tenants had been accepted for the last twenty-four houses completed. Four voted against the acceptance of the tender of £6,700, which was carried.

Just like Crelake Park, there were questions raised about the conditions of Witham Park's council houses. In February 1930 Mr J. Snow, chairman of the Sanitary Committee, reported that they had been investigating the cause of the dampness and recommended that the council treat the worst houses with a special waterproofing mixture.

This report and recommendation drew a vigorous protest from Mr Wilkins, who contended that the houses had not been built according to the specifications and should never have been taken over. It was unfair that the ratepayers should have to bear the cost of the repairs. The Sanitary Committee had not done their duty. The clerk reminded the council that they went as a body and inspected the houses when they were being built and agreed to alterations in the specifications.

Mr J. N. Singleton, surveyor, said he thought the cost of the waterproofing would work out at about £5 or £6 per house. An amendment moved by Mr J. Lee that they should plaster the whole of the houses was defeated – only three voting for it – and the committee's recommendation that the worst of the houses should be treated with the waterproofing mixture was approved.[29]

[26] *Western Morning News*, 11 January 1928.
[27] *Western Morning News*, 8 February 1928.
[28] *Western Morning News*, 2 May 1928.
[29] *Western Morning News*, 5 February 1930.

Tavistock RDC

Houses built in connection with the Tavistock RDC were scattered over different villages. They didn't have estates like Crelake and Witham Park.

On 7 February 1920, it was resolved to apply for sanction to borrow £250 15s for Mary Tavy and £85 for Meavy in connection with the building schemes.[30] On 26 April 1920 there was an advert for tenders for the erection of eight houses, each in two blocks of four, in the village of Lydford. 'Plans and specifications can be inspected by appointment with the Council's Architect, Mr T.H. Harris.'[31]

On Saturday 22 May 1920, tenders were invited for the erection of six houses in the village of Meavy.[32] On 26 January 1921, tenders were also required for the erection of thirty-six houses, in blocks of two and four, at Bere Alston; two blocks of two in Buckland Monachorum Village and three blocks of two in Bere Ferrers.[33] On Saturday 14 May 1921, there was an advert for tenders for the erection of twelve houses at Lifton and six houses at Meavy.[34]

The *Western Morning News* reported on 25 June 1921 that a sum of £33,000 was required for Tavistock rural housing schemes, out of which £13,000 had been raised by local bonds, leaving £20,000 to be borrowed.[35] The Public Loans Commissioners were prepared to lend that money as it was required. The council had exhausted their funds, so were asking for sanction to borrow money from the commissioners so that the houses might be paid for by instalments. There were sixteen houses being built at Horrabridge, twelve at Mary Tavy and eight at Lydford.

The council reported that the housing commissioner thought the Ministry would require a higher rent to be fixed than 6s or 7s a week, but the council considered the rental sufficient for working people and took no action in the matter.

In January 1925, Tavistock RDC reported on the urgent need for houses for the working classes in the district. At their meeting they also discussed the difficulty of getting owners to repair dilapidated dwellings. Dr C. C. Brodrick, medical officer of health, stated that a house at Mary Tavy, which was occupied by a workman, was in such a deplorable condition that there was a hole in the top of the roof big enough for a man to put his head through. The owner of the cottage who lived at Bradworthy would not repair it. Mr T. H. Harris, sanitary inspector, said he wrote to the owner at the end of November and gave him seven days' notice to repair the roof. Dr Brodrick said that the whole house ought to be blown or burnt down. Mr Harris suggested that the council should make an order to abate the nuisance. Anything was a nuisance that was prejudicial to health and he believed if they made an order, the work would be done. It was resolved to call upon the owner to carry out the repairs.

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[30] *Western Times*, 7 February 1920.
[31] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 26 April 1920.
[32] *Western Morning News*, 22 May 1920.
[33] *Western Morning News*, 26 January 1921.
[34] *Western Morning News*, 14 May 1921.
[35] *Western Morning News*, 25 June 1921.

Dr Brockrick said they wanted more cottages, as many of those now tenanted were in such a dilapidated condition that they were beyond repair. In some, walls were covered with mildew. He drew attention to a house at Bere Alston, which was in such a shocking condition that half of the putty from the windows had gone and the walls were covered with half an inch of mildew. Mr Harris said the owners, although called upon to repair the house, had done nothing.

Mr Southcott asked Dr Brockrick the question, 'Who do you suggest should build the cottages?' to which Dr Brodrick replied, 'That has nothing to do with me. Apply to the Ministry of Health and they will build them for you.'[36]

Mr Northmore said the problem was that working men could not afford to live in many of the houses that were built for them. Many of the houses were occupied by people who could afford to live elsewhere. Mr Southcott asked how they could expect a working man who was earning 30s a week to live in the council houses and pay 10s a week rent.

In September 1925, Tavistock RDC were to build 100 non-parlour type houses throughout the district, to be let at a rental of 5s 8d per week. They approved an initial building of eighty-two of the houses; the remaining eighteen to be in reserve:

> Bere Alston, 20; Bere Ferrers, 4; Meavy, 4; Walkhampton, 12; Buckland Monachorum, 4, in those parishes' sites have been obtained and paid for; Peter Tavy, 6; Princetown, 6; Lifton, 12; Thrushelton, 4; Whitchurch, 6; Lamerton, 4.
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> The estimated loss per house per annum to the Council is £4 10s. The Council further resolved to apply to the Ministry of Health for a loan of £1,400 for housing.[37]

On 2 January 1926, the Ministry of Health gave consent for building of twenty-eight houses in the parishes of Meavy, Bere Alston, Peter Tavy, Walkhampton and Buckland.[38]

In May 1926, Tavistock RDC advertised for tenders for the erection of twelve houses at Lifton and four houses at Peter Tavy, and to borrow £6,000.[39]

In August 1927, it was reported that the first two houses at Whitchurch were now ready for occupation and the last four would be soon. Of the contract price of £2,880, work to the value of £2,810 had been completed. At Lifton, of the contract price of £6,060, work to the value of £1,810 had been completed and work to the value of £1,900 had been completed at Buckland Monachorum.

Eight houses had been tenanted at Peter Tavy. At Bere Ferrers and Bere Alston, £10,420 worth of work had been done out of the contract value of £11,180. At Walkhampton, twelve houses were being erected at a contract price of £6,000, of which £4,612 in construction had been completed. The total contract had amounted to about £36,570, of which £29,792 had been completed to date.

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[36] *Western Morning News*, 5 January 1925.
[37] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 18 September 1925.
[38] *Western Morning News*, 2 January 1926.
[39] *Western Morning News*, 31 May 1926.

There was then a discussion regarding rent collection. Mr Friend believed it was not wise to allow tenants to go on for any length of time without paying, for some would not pay in twelve months. Mr Rodd thought the council should pass as resolution that the collectors should be compelled to collect the rent once a week. On the suggestion of Mr Northmore, Mr Rodd moved that the rents be collected once a fortnight. No one seconded and the matter was left in abeyance.[40]

On 12 September 1927 at the Tavistock RDC meeting, Rev Austin S. Lester, rector of Peter Tavy, considered that agricultural labourers could not afford to pay the rents of the council houses as they were too high. Alderman F. J. W. Nicholls, chairman of the Housing Committee, said the accountant considered that the rent could not be reduced and that 5s 8d per week was the lowest that could be charged. Mr Lester desired that the houses should be let at 4s 6d a week, but that could not be done. Mr W. Willcock asked how many houses were occupied by agricultural labourers at Peter Tavy. Alderman Nicholls said that if the question was asked how many agricultural labourers were put in the eighty-three houses that had been built and were being built, he would have to answer that he could not find any. Rev Lester said, 'they cannot afford it.'[41]

In November 1927, Mr F. J. W. Nicholls, Housing Committee, reported that the first eight houses at Walkhampton were tenanted and the remaining four would be completed in six weeks. The committee had discussed a suggestion by the Rev A. S. Lester that the rents of all the council houses be reduced to 4s 6d per week, but by a majority had decided against it. The report was adopted.[42]

On 5 December 1927 at a Tavistock RDC meeting, Rev A. S. Lester asked Mr T. Toop of the Finance Committee whether the committee had considered his motion on the agenda to the effect that the rents of the council houses erected under the Housing Act, 1923–24, be reduced to 4s 6d a week. He was referring to the council houses at Mary Tavy, which were built in 1919 and which would, with extras, cost about £1,200 each. 'The total cost of repairs during the last four years to the Council's houses in the district, including materials, came to just under £500.'[43] Mr Toop said that all the bills for the repairs to the Mary Tavy and other houses had been passed by the Finance Committee. Regarding the reduction of rents to 4s 6d per week, the committee had discussed it and considered 5s 8d a week a fair rent. They recommended the rents remain at 5s 8d a week, and he moved it. Mr Northmore seconded and it was carried. Mr Lester's motion was not seconded.

In response, on Wednesday 1 February 1928, Rev A. S. Lester wrote a long letter in the *Western Morning News* on the subject of Tavistock rural housing repairs and management:

> The Tavistock Rural District Council built 32 houses under the 1919 Act, 12 at Mary Tavy, 16 at Horrabridge and 4 at Lydford. The total sum spent on repairs and management during the last five years, 1927, amounts to £481 (neglecting audit fees) or £96.4s per year, a matter of £3 per house per annum. This works out at just 15% of the rents received. There have been

[40] *Western Morning News*, 13 August 1927.
[41] *Western Morning News*, 12 September 1927.
[42] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 5 November 1927.
[43] *Western Morning News*, 5 December 1927.

> some particularly heavy bills in the last year for painting and decoration, an item of expenditure that should only be incurred about every five years.
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> Here are some of the principal items summarised: Messrs. C. Doidge and Son, builders, Mary Tavy, £91.0s.7d; Mr R. Toop, builder, Horrabridge, £20.1s.1d; Mr C.M. Bond, ironmonger, Tavistock £19.12s.7d; Messrs. Coalbrooke, Dale & Co. £13.12s.10d distempering and decoration £184.14s.9d. All the above are totals of amounts paid in the last four years. Out of the £91 paid to Messrs Doidge and Son, for carpenter's work and materials, repairing windows, cutting out and putting in damp-course over windows, £8.0s.10½d; repairing wood floors and material, £7.5s.5½d; fencing, £8.1s.2½d; excavating and laying drains (mostly labour), £344.5s.8d. A total of £55.13s.2½d on the 12 Mary Tavy houses, all of which should have been quite unnecessary for houses so recently built.
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> That the drains should require to be excavated in March 1925, three years after the houses were built and re-laid, seems to me extraordinary; but a total of 519 hours' labour was expended on this item. Were the levels wrong?
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> It is obvious that the cost of maintenance of these houses is related very intimately with the question of rent; and my impression after looking through these accounts is that a good deal of the expenditure, probably as much as £100, should never have been incurred for houses so recently erected. Is it usual within 3 or 4 years of building to have drains dug up, new cesspits sunk, floors repaid, damp-courses put in over windows, an inspection pit sunk (as at Lydford for £3), or fencing done?[44]

Then he gets to his main point, asking why isn't 4s 6d rent possible for the tenant.

On 3 December 1927, Tavistock RDC reported that the Ministry of Health approved tenders received for council houses at Princetown. Mr Hillson drew attention to the urgent need of a water supply at Walkhampton, which had been intensified by the new council houses.[45]

In May 1928, Tavistock RDC reported that the number of houses tenanted was seventy-six and the number under construction was twenty-four. The total contract price was £47,513 and the expenditure on contracts was £40,632. The balance of work to be completed was £5,871. At Lifton, six houses had been completed and two more would be ready for completion the following month.

The matter for discussion at that meeting was the tenants' gardens. It had been reported to the committee that some of the tenants were not taking an interest in their garden, which was expected of them. Some time ago, the committee had visited the houses, and while they found some of the gardens growing wonderful crops, others were found to be in a most disgraceful state. Most of the committee were practical farmers who knew what the gardens ought to be like. Thistles were growing as high as the councillor, and that was no exaggeration.[46]

In the following month, Mr F. J. W. Nicholls, chairman of the Housing Committee, reported that he had inspected the gardens of council houses at Walkhampton, Peter Tavy and Horrabridge and found them to be in a much better condition than on his previous visit. Several gardens were excellent, although others were not so good. Mr R. R. Rodd thought that in bad

[44] *Western Morning News*, 1 February 1928.
[45] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 3 December 1927.
[46] *Western Morning News*, 21 May 1928.

cases the tenants should be informed that failure to satisfactorily cultivate the gardens would result in a week's notice to quit.[47]

In August 1928, Mr Lester said that he believed that Lifton people with small families or no children had been accepted as tenants for council houses and that several were not working-class people. Mr Major, a Lifton representative, said there had been a lack of working-class applicants and selections had had to be made from people of a slightly higher social grade or else from people outside the parish.[48]

On 23 March 1929, at a Tavistock RDC meeting, it was suggested that the letting of council houses should be a business proposition, which led to an energetic debate. Mr J. Major said that it would be folly for them to take a man as a tenant with a family when they knew he could not pay the rent. After all, it was a business proposition and they must look at the matter from a business point of view. Mr F. G. Southcott said that if a man had houses to let and had received applications from people with families from whom he knew it would be difficult to get the rent, he doubted very much whether he would accept them as tenants. Mr Cole suggested that in future, when they selected tenants for their houses, they should ask them what their income was. Mr R. Toop said his committee were unable to get the rates from some of the tenants of the council houses.

Presenting the Housing Committee's report, Alderman F. J. W. Nicholls said the total contract price for 100 houses was £47,034, the total expenditure to date was £46,744 and the balance to be expended on housing contracts was £290. Ninety-two houses had been tenanted and eight were under construction.[49]

On 20 April 1929, Alderman F. J. W. Nicholls, chairman of the Housing Committee, reported that the Ministry of Health had approved of the erection of twelve houses at Bere Alston. An offer of half an acre of land as a building site at Chillington for £50 was accepted.[50]

On 15 June 1929, Mr Nicholls reported that the total cost of the 100 houses of the last scheme was £47,034, of which £46,954 had been spent. Under the present scheme, twenty-two houses were being built at a cost of £8,552, of which £3,550 had been expended. Six tenants had been selected from the seventeen applications received for the Brentor houses and six from the twenty applicants for the six houses at Buckland. The committee recommended the council to accept the tender of Mr C.B. James of Callington for building four houses at Chilaton for the sum of £1,729.

Rev A.S. Lester asked whether the rent of the houses of the new scheme would be the same as those of the old scheme as he believed the houses in the new scheme would cost a little less and working men with families were not able to afford to pay the rent of the houses already erected by the council. Mr R. Toop said he did not think the houses would cost much less. They

[47] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 22 June 1928.
[48] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 17 August 1928.
[49] *Western Morning News*, 23 March 1929.
[50] *Western Morning News*, 20 April 1929.

would practically be about the same. Most of the applications for the six houses at Buckland were made by masons and carpenters who could afford to pay the rent.[51]

In August 1929, Rev A. S. Lester again proposed:

> …that, in the case of agricultural labourers and other working-class men whose weekly wages do not exceed £2 the rent of all council houses built during the last five years or being built now shall be 4s a week, plus rates. Other tenants to pay as before.[52]

After a long discussion, the motion was lost; only the proposer and Mr T. Friend voting in its favour.

[51] *Western Morning News*, 15 June 1929.
[52] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 17 August 1929.