



Minutes of the 464<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council  
held in the Castle, Townhall, Bangor  
Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at 10.30 am

The Officers joined the Meeting at 10.45 am

**Present:**

Ald Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough (Chair)
Cllr Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Vice Chair)
Cllr Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Ald Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
Ald Allan Bresland	Derry City & Strabane District
Ald Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Cllr Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough
Cllr Michael Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

**In Attendance:**

Clark Bailie	Chief Executive (NIHE)
David Moore	Director of Corporate Services (NIHE)
Paul Price	(Department for Communities)
Donna Knowles	(Department for Communities)
Nicola McEvoy	(Department for Communities)
Connor Smith	Community Cohesion and Involvement (NIHE)
Kelly Cameron	Secretary (NIHE, Secretariat)

**Apologies:**

Ald Phillip Brett	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough
Cllr Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Ald John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough

<b>1.0</b>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>The Chair extended a welcome to Members and Officials from the Housing Executive and the Department for Communities.</p> <p>Before proceeding to the business of the meeting, Alderman Bill Keery, Mayor of Ards and North Down welcomed Members to the Borough and wished them well in their deliberations.</p>	
<b>2.0</b>	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>None.</p>	

<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b>To adopt the Minutes of the 463<sup>rd</sup> Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019</b></p> <p>It was proposed by N Mathison, seconded by A Bresland and resolved, that the Minutes of the 463<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
<p><b>4.0</b></p> <p><b>4.1</b></p> <p><b>4.2</b></p> <p><b>4.3</b></p>	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b></p> <p><b>Page 4 Item 4 – Grants for Rural Areas</b></p> <p>It was noted at a presentation on how grants for rural areas are calculated and allocated by the Department for Communities will be arranged for a future meeting.</p> <p><b>Page 5 Item 5 - Welfare Policy in Northern Ireland</b></p> <p>It was reported that Members had received an emailed copy of the House of Commons Publication entitled 'Welfare Policy in Northern Ireland, for their information.</p> <p><b>Members Queries</b></p> <p>The following queries have been responded to since the last meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Mathison – (i) Breakdown of Bonfire Costings by Council Area &amp; (ii) Smartmove Scheme</li> <li>• Councillor Ruane – Grounds Maintenance</li> <li>• Councillor Kelly – Scheme at Wandsworth Housing Development It was reported that the Housing Executive are currently undertaking further investigation with a proposal to bring a scheme forward.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Secretary</b></p>
<p><b>5.0</b></p> <p><b>5.1</b></p>	<p><b>The Housing Executive's Board Bulletin</b></p> <p><b>Muckamore Abbey Hospital</b></p> <p>Members noted that in Muckamore Abbey Hospital, recent media coverage had highlighted concerns associated with patient care and decisions made about relocation of patients currently in the hospital.</p>	

	<p>Members were informed that a meeting had taken place between the Housing Executive and the Health and Social Care Trust officials to ascertain the project scale and other issues relating to the resettlement of patients. The Board was advised the Housing Executive has received, from Health, a Strategic Outline Case seeking approval to develop two separate schemes (Belfast and Lisburn/Crumlin) to facilitate the resettlement. This is currently being considered.</p>	
<b>5.2</b>	<p><b>Economic Appraisal for 30 Craigy Hill, Larne</b></p> <p>The Board had approved the Economic Appraisal, recommending the demolition of a fire damaged aluminium bungalow at 30 Craigy Hill, Larne. Consequently, the Economic Appraisal is now being submitted to the Department for Communities for approval.</p>	
<b>5.3</b>	<p><b>Economic Appraisal for Orlit Dwelling at 138 Newtownhamilton Road, Armagh</b></p> <p>It was reported that the Board had approved the recommended sale of a semi-detached Orlit dwelling at 138 Newtownhamilton Road, Armagh to the open market. The property would require significant investment to bring it up to a modern and sellable standard.</p>	
<b>5.4</b>	<p><b>ERDF funding for a Thermal Improvement Programme for NIHE Non-Traditional Stock</b></p> <p>The Board had noted the allocation of €22.951m the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to part fund a thermal improvement programme for NIHE non-traditional stock, to be matched by €21.959m funding by NIHE.</p> <p>The Board had approved the initiation of the procurements for delivery of the No Fines element of the programme. It is proposed to procure the No Fines element of the programme using a two-fold procurement strategy, with the first tranche of schemes procured via an Open Tender, and the remainder procured via the Fusion 21 Energy Efficiency Measures Framework.</p>	
<b>5.5</b>	<p><b>Ballymena General MEI (Multi Element Improvement)</b></p> <p>It was reported that the Board approved the Tender Report for Multi Element Improvement works to 21 properties in the Mid &amp; East Antrim Area at a construction cost of £1,025,000. The objective of the scheme is to address poor conditions and inadequate space standards in the properties and provide them with an extended life.</p>	

<b>5.6</b>	<b>Waterside Triangle</b>  The Board had approved the tender of the Waterside Triangle scheme to undertake the renewing of roofing, including extending roofs over balconies and walkways and placing external insulated cladding on 52 flats and maisonettes in the Waterside District West Area, Derry.	
<b>5.7</b>	<b>Update on Year Two of the Customer Excellence Strategy (CES) 2017/2018 – 2019/2020</b>  It was reported that the Board was updated on the activities detailed in the Year 2 Action Plan of the Customer Excellence Strategy (CES) 2017/18 – 2019/20. The CES sets out a clear direction for how we plan to improve the way we deliver services to our customers and supports other organisational strategies including our Corporate and Business Plan and the work undertaken through other customer facing strategies. There are Annual Action Plans, accompanied with the strategy that outlines some of the key activities that will help contribute to the successful delivery and implementation of the wider strategy. The Board had approved publication of the update of Year 2 Action Plan activities on the Housing Executive’s website.	
<b>5.8</b>	<b>Draft Supporting People Strategy 2020–2023</b>  Following the publication by NIHE of the Supporting People Plan 2019/20 and Strategic Intent 2020-2023, there is Departmental requirement to follow up on this with a three year Supporting People Strategy for 2020-2023. The Board was provided with an early draft of the Supporting People Strategy for their consideration. The Draft Strategy sets out the blueprint for our collective way forward in the provision of housing support services over the next three years – and the Strategy has been considered at the third meeting of the Supporting People Progress and Scrutiny Group. The forward timeline for the development of the Strategy requires a public consultation to take place from November 2019 to February 2020, followed by a finalised version incorporating consultation feedback and including a detailed three year delivery plan approval at March 2020 Board. A draft for consideration as a consultation document will be provided to October Board.	
<b>5.9</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission</b>  The Board was informed of the 19 <sup>th</sup> Annual Progress report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of the Housing Executive’s Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan. The report sets out how the Housing Executive mainstreams equality and good relations through Corporate and Business planning and details those objectives and performance measures that target housing inequalities.	

<p><b>5.10</b></p>	<p>These include the Supporting People programme, Housing for all initiatives, Traveller research and accommodation, Homelessness and the Community Cohesion Programme. The report also lists our performance in terms of training staff, access to information including language support, data collection and monitoring, consultation, and policy screening and impact assessment.</p> <p><b>Update on Community Cohesion Strategy 2015/2020</b></p> <p>The Board noted the annual update of the Community Cohesion Strategy.</p>	
<p><b>6.0</b></p>	<p><b>Housing Issues, Department for Communities</b></p> <p>Mr Price and Mr Knowles gave a detailed monthly update on the Department for Communities Housing Issues, under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social Newbuild starts</li><li>• Co-ownership</li><li>• New Shared Neighborhoods (TBUC)</li><li>• Programme for Social Reform</li><li>• Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy</li><li>• Reclassification of Northern Ireland's Social Housing Providers</li><li>• Supporting People Delivery Strategy</li><li>• Homelessness Strategy</li><li>• St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena</li><li>• Regulation of the Private Rented Sector</li><li>• Increasing Housing Supply</li><li>• Affordable Warmth Scheme</li><li>• NIHE Rent Scheme</li><li>• Welfare Reform Mitigation payments</li></ul> <p>In response to Ms Grehan's question, it was explained that the DfC cannot extend the mitigation period which is set out in legislation to end March 2020. Also, there would be an additional £25m required to cover the shortfall which is not available.</p> <p>It was reported that there may be another mitigation available 'discretionary housing payment' which is available in the private rented sector and in the UK was extended in the social sector but would also be additional funding which would need to be made available.</p>	

	<p>Ms Grehan reiterated concern at the low level of awareness and preparation of tenants that this mitigation will be ceasing in March 2020. Some tenants could be losing up to £25 -£30 from their housing benefit payments and the potential rent arrears when the mitigation payments ends, she added her concern at the potential of evictions and limited appropriate accommodation.</p> <p>Members felt that tenants urgently need to be made of aware of these changes, in order to be prepared.</p> <p>Mr Price stated that political intervention is required to amend the date, but then additional funding would be required to meet the shortfall and the implementation of IT systems etc.</p> <p>It was noted that Members had agreed during their 'In Committee' session that a letter to be sent to Secretary of State asking for consideration to be given an extension to mitigation payments exceeding March 2020.</p> <p>The Chair asked that the Officers from the Department and the Housing Executive keep the Housing Council informed of the developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ERDF Investment Growth and Jobs Programme 2014-2020</li> </ul>	<b>Secretary</b>
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**PRESENTATIONS**

<b>7.0</b>	<p><b>Northern Ireland Housing Council - Statutory Appointments to the Board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive</b></p> <p>It was noted that this item was postponed until the November Meeting.</p>	<b>DfC</b>
<b>8.0</b>	<p><b>Update on the Social Housing Reform Programme</b></p> <p>Ms Nicola McEvoy from the Department for Communities gave Members an update on the Social Housing Reform Programme. (Copies of the Slides are appended to these minutes – Appendix A).</p> <p>The Reform Programme is to ensure the existing delivery structures for social housing, including the Housing Executive, housing associations and the Department, are as effective as they can be and by introducing new policies to improve how these organisations operate.</p>	

	<p>The vision is to create 'Housing structures that support the provision of social and affordable homes, in successful communities where people are proud to live.'</p> <p>The social housing reform programme aims, are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is tenant focused;</li> <li>• provides quality homes;</li> <li>• is sustainable;</li> <li>• increases investment in social housing;</li> <li>• is fit for the future;</li> <li>• allows landlords to be creative and play a positive role in the services they provide.</li> </ul> <p>Members noted that in the absence of reform by 2020 there is no prospect of investment outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divestment of approximately 43,000 homes</li> <li>• Massive increase of those in housing stress</li> </ul> <p>In-depth discussions took place in relation to Housing Executive rent freeze, Housing Executive rents need to be increased, stock transfers and the need to maintain existing stock.</p> <p><b>Agreed:</b> Members requested a detailed breakdown of the Housing Executive Debt and Housing Management costs as a single figure of £130 million.</p> <p><b>Agreed:</b> A presentation on small scale stock transfers would be arranged for a meeting in early 2020.</p> <p><i>Mr M Ruane – Left the meeting at 12 noon.</i></p>	<p><b>C Bailie</b></p> <p><b>DfC</b></p>
<p><b>9.0</b></p>	<p><b>Update on the Housing Executive’s Community Cohesion Strategy</b></p> <p>Mr Connor Smith from the Housing Executive gave Members an update on the Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020. (Copies of the Slides are appended to these minutes – Appendix B).</p> <p>Members noted that the Housing Executive encourages a more active and participative involvement of residents and community groups in the delivery of housing services. Community Involvement is about directly involving communities in the everyday issues that affect them. It involves research, consultation and participation of a whole range of stakeholders.</p>	

The Community Involvement Strategy provides a framework for the Housing Executive and residents to work together toward mutually agreed outcomes. It sets out how residents, along with their local community associations, can get involved in developing their local services to improve their quality of life. The Housing Executive believes that more involved communities are better informed, can contribute to better decision-making, help improve services and standards locally and develop their own skills and opportunities.

Mr Smith then highlighted the five key themes within the Strategy:-

- Race Relations;
- Communities in Transition;
- Interfaces;
- Segregation/integration; and
- Flags, Emblems, Sectional Symbols

Members welcomed the excellent work the Housing Executive are carrying out and appreciate the sensitivities and complexities around such issues.

Mr Mathison referred to the strategic approach the Housing Executive take to tackle such issues as flags, emblems, murals etc in their estates.

Mr Smith explained that proactive negotiations with communities and the funding of locally based re-imaging initiatives have had significant impact on our single identity estates and we work with both sides of the community, at the communities pace in order to affect change. Members noted that there is clear evidence of how re-imaging projects can be the catalyst for physical, social and economic regeneration and the Housing Executive are committed to carry forward this work in the new strategy in order to develop community capacity and build stronger and more confident communities.

*Mr J Speers left the room at 12.10 pm*

Mr Price referred to the Executive Office who has been commissioned a Team to address Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition established as part of commitments made under the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements and suggested it might be informative to invite a representative to give an overview of their programme of work.

It was proposed by N Mathison, seconded by A Grehan that an invitation should be sent to the Executive Office inviting a representative from the Commissioning Team.



	<p>This proposal did not receive support from the Chair.</p> <p>Following a lengthy debate, it was agreed that the decision should be by a show of hands.</p> <p>6 Members were present in the meeting at the time of voting:-</p> <p>4 Members voted for a forthcoming Presentation and 2 Members voted against the Presentation.</p> <p>Therefore, it was agreed that the Secretary would write to the Executive Office inviting a representative from the Commissioning Team to attend a future Meeting of the Housing Council, to provide an overview of their programme of work.</p>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>10.0</b>	<p><b>Social Housing Development Programme - Progress Report September 2019</b></p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
<b>11.0</b>	<p><b>The Housing Executive's Scheme Starts September 2019</b></p> <p>Members noted the reports.</p>	
<b>12.0</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p>	
<b>12.1</b>	<p>Councillor Anne Marie Fitzgerald referred to a heating scheme in Craigavon, she undertook to provide Mr Bailie with specific details of the case for a response.</p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	<b>A Fitzgerald</b>
<b>13.0</b>	<p><b>Date and Venue of Next Meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in the Craigavon Civic Centre</b></p>	

The Meeting concluded at 12.45 pm