



**Minutes of the 488th Meeting
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on
Thursday 10th February 2022 at 10 am via Zoom**

Present:

Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Chair)
Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

In Attendance:

David Polley	Department for Communities
Grainia Long	Chief Executive, Housing Executive
Catherine McFarland	Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance
Andrew Barbour	NIHE (For Item on the Agenda)
Gillian Greer	NIHE (For Item on the Agenda)
Kelly Cameron	Secretary (Housing Executive Secretariat)

Apologies:

Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough (Vice Chair)
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough
Paul Price	Department for Communities

1.0	<p><u>Welcome</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed David Polley from the Department for Communities, Grainia Long and the Presenters Catherine McFarland, Andrew Barbour and Gillian Greer from the Housing Executive.</p>	
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<p>2.0</p>	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>The Presenter, Gillian Greer declared that she was a Councillor in Ards & North Down Council area.</p>	
<p>3.0</p>	<p>To adopt the Minutes of the 487th Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 13th January 2022</p> <p>It was proposed by Alderman Speers and seconded by Councillor Mathison and resolved, that the Minutes of the 487th Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 13th January 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
<p>4.0 4.1</p>	<p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <p><u>Members Queries</u></p> <p>It was noted that Members had received responses to their queries, as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alderman Jim Speers – Consultants Assessing Houses • All Members - Housing Associations newbuild guide 	
<p>5.0</p>	<p><u>Forward Workplan</u></p> <p>The workplan was noted.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>
<p>6.0</p>	<p><u>Update by the Department on the Department for Communities Housing Top Issues</u></p> <p>Mr David Polley gave an update of changes under the specific headings on the Department for Communities (DfC) Housing Issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Newbuild starts • Co-ownership • Programme for Social Reform • Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy • Reclassification of Northern Ireland Social Housing Providers • Supporting People Delivery Strategy 	

- Homelessness Strategy
- Regulation of the Private Rented Sector

Councillor Mathison's in relation to the Private Tenancy Bill asked on the provision of the 'notice to quit' period are there amendments to provide some protection for private landlords, in particular with tenants who have significant rent arrears.

In response David Polley confirmed that the Consultation Report will be issued in the coming weeks, there is a power in the Bill for different lengths 'notices to quit' and exemptions for individual cases, as it is at the minute 4 weeks for under 12 months; 8 weeks for 1 to 10 years.

- Increasing Housing Supply
- Affordable Warmth Scheme
- NIHE Rent Increase
- ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 - 2020
- Housing Executive historical debt and exclusion from having to pay Corporation Tax
- Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes Framework
- Long term rent trajectory
- Affordability of social rents

In response to Councillor Mathison's query, in relation to Intermediate Rent, Mr Polly explained that there was a public consultation on the delivery of Intermediate Rent which was published in October 2021 which the Housing Council received a presentation on the proposals. Following closure of the consultation on 14th of January 2022, officials have begun to analyse the responses received.

	<p>The outcome of the consultation will be published in due course, subject to Ministerial approval, and work is ongoing to develop the detail of the final scheme, and will begin to make preparation for its implementation.</p>	
<p>8.0</p>	<p><u>Presentation on Discretionary Housing Payments</u></p> <p>Andrew Barbour and Gillian Greer gave Members a presentation on Discretionary Housing Payments (Copies of the Slides are appended to these Minutes – Appendix A).</p> <p>Members noted that in June 2021, the Department for Communities had commenced a review of the policy intention of the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme and in response, changes were made to the scheme. It was noted that this was a Stage 1 review that didn't require any legislative changes, however the 2nd stage recommendations would require a change in legislation and were therefore not currently being progressed.</p> <p>Members were given an overview of outcome of the Stage 1 review, the DHP scheme itself; the recent changes and the ongoing work that the Housing Benefit (HB) units are carrying out.</p> <p>Members welcomed the policy change to remove the two year time limit, for claimants receiving DHP.</p> <p>It was confirmed that from April 2021 to December 2021, there has been 17,877 of awards paid out this year.</p> <p>The Chair requested the number of claimants who have been taken off Discretionary Housing Benefit over the past year.</p> <p>Several Members reiterated the importance of communicating with claimants, keeping them updated of their eligibility and the changes, assurance was given that there are several forums and platforms to deliver the scheme and target those in need.</p> <p>Referring to the LHA Award of the 75th percentile, Mr Barbour explained that as it is discretionary and each case is accessed on an individual basis subject to their circumstances and there are several factors attributing to what rates they are awarded; ie. household details, location, what the LHA rates for the area and then are accessed individually to award the percentile of the LHA.</p> <p>David Polley commended and thanked the Housing Executive Team on their hard work.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Presenters for a very informative Presentation.</p>	<p>A Barbour/ G Greer</p>

<p>9.0</p>	<p><u>Housing Starts January 2022</u></p> <p>Members noted the Report.</p>	
<p>10.0</p>	<p><u>Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Conference 28th-30th June in Manchester</u></p> <p>It was agreed that Mark Cooper (Vice Chair) would represent the Housing Council.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>
<p>11.0</p>	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Housing Executive's response to the Department of Finance draft three year budget.</p> <p>Ms Long drew Members attention to the Housing Executive's response to the Department of Finance's draft three year budget, which had been circulated to Members for their information. She added that there are a number of significant implications for the housing sector potentially for the Homelessness budget and in particular temporary accommodation and Ms Long offered to discuss further at future Meetings.</p>	<p>GL</p>
<p>12.0</p>	<p><u>Date and Venue of next Meeting</u></p> <p>It was agreed that at the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 10th March at 10 am via Zoom.</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 11.20 am.