



Minutes of the 469th Meeting
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council
held in the Omagh Council offices
Thursday, 12th March 2020 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
Cllr Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Ald John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Ald Allan Bresland	Derry City & Strabane District
Cllr Michael Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

In Attendance:

Clark Bailie	Chief Executive (NIHE)
Paul Price	Department for Communities
David Polley	Department for Communities
Jill Smyth	Community Safety Manager
Shauna Mulgrew	Corporate Research Officer
Gerard Jervas	Research Unit
Rosalyn Millar	Research Unit
Kelly Cameron	Secretary (NIHE, Secretariat)

Apologies:

Cllr Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough
Ald Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Cllr Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough

1.0	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair extended a welcome to Members and Officials from the Housing Executive and the Department for Communities.</p>	
2.0	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None.</p>	

<p>3.0</p>	<p>To adopt the Minutes of the 468th Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday 13th February 2020</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr Fitzgerald, seconded by Cllr Kelly and resolved, that the Minutes of the 468th Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 13th February 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
<p>4.0</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p><u>Item 4.2 – Adaptation Performance and OT waiting times and assessments</u></p> <p>It was reported that a joint presentation by representatives from the Department of Health & Social Services and the Housing Executive has been arranged for the April Meeting to revisit and monitor the Adaptation Performance and OT waiting times and assessments.</p> <p><u>Item 9.0 – NI Water</u></p> <p>A presentation by representatives from NI Water has been arranged for the May Housing Council meeting in relation to wastewater capacity issues.</p> <p>Members reiterated their concerns on the water and sewage issue, preventing planning permissions being granted in certain areas.</p> <p>Mr Bailie confirmed that Housing Associations are reporting that it is not stopping newbuild schemes at present, but they are beginning to see potential blockages in the future.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p>
<p>5.0</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p>The Housing Executive’s Board Bulletin Board Meeting – Wednesday, 26th February 2020</p> <p>Mr Bailie reported on the Housing Executive Board’s deliberations as follows:-</p> <p>The Board received two presentations on the Draft Budget Submission 2020/21 and on the ARTES Project – NIHE Construction Skills and Learning Centre</p> <p>Mr Bailie gave a brief overview on plans for the ARTES Project. It was explained that the initiative was described as the Housing Executive’s contribution to improving the skills shortage within the wider construction industry.</p>	

	<p>The project focus on strategic drivers, a multi-skilled approach, actions plans for years 1-3, sustainability and social value clauses, KPIs (associated with contractor sustainability; directly employed trade apprentices; community sustainability partnership programme), reporting/monitoring, collaboration/partnership working, staffing, estimated costs and benefits.</p> <p>Members commended the ARTES project being taken forward by the Housing Executive and fully supported the initiative and looked forward with interest on the progress of the Project.</p> <p>It was agreed that a future presentation will be provided to Members on the ARTES project.</p>	Secretary
5.2	Monthly Finance Report as at 31st February 2020	
5.3	HR Policies (Resourcing Policies and Procedures and Organisational Change Policy	
5.4	Approval to Award Contracts- Provision of Insurances	
5.5	Provision of a Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency Accommodation Service	
	<p>It was noted that the Board had approved the award of a contract to Queen's Quarter Housing Ltd for a period of 3 years with an option to extend for a further 2 years.</p>	
5.6	Planned Maintenance Procurement Strategy	
	<p>It was reported that following Board approval to collapse the Planned Maintenance & Improvements and Doors and Window Replacement tenders, some planned maintenance schemes have been delivered by a series of interim elemental tenders. The tenders have covered the following elements: Bathroom and Kitchen replacements, External Cyclical Maintenance, Bathroom only schemes, Kitchen only schemes and Double Glazing. These interim tenders were undertaken to ensure the continuity of delivering planned maintenance schemes whilst a new planned maintenance tender is conducted.</p> <p>The Board approved the new procurement strategy for delivering Planned Maintenance and Improvement schemes from December 2020 for a period up to seven years.</p>	
5.7	Transfer of land at Manse Way/Milewater Drive, New Mossley to Connswater Homes	
	<p>It was noted that the Board had approved the transfer of land at Manse Way/Milewater Drive New Mossley to Connswater Homes for</p>	

<p>5.8</p> <p>5.9</p> <p>5.10</p> <p>5.11</p> <p>5.12</p> <p>5.13</p> <p>5.14</p> <p>5.15</p>	<p>the construction of 49 social new build dwellings.</p> <p>Supporting People 2,4 & 8% Budget Adjustment and Associated Reinvestment</p> <p>Core Landlord Benchmarking Activities</p> <p>Landlord Rental Income Reserve and Stock Investment</p> <p>Compliance/Health & Safety Assurance Report</p> <p>Water Hygiene (Legionella) Strategy</p> <p>The Board had noted the recommended strategy following a review of completed Legionella Risk Assessments across all Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) tenure types. The strategy will establish the level of both surveys and remedial works required to provide assurance that the Housing Executive is compliant with its statutory and regulatory requirements in relation to the control of legionella bacteria.</p> <p>Supporting People Programme – Progress Status Update</p> <p>Land Acquisitions and Disposals Quarterly Update</p> <p>COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update - Thursday 12 March 2020</p> <p>Mr Bailie then gave a detailed update on how the Housing Executive are preparing in light of ongoing developments and the business continuity planning with regard to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and how they are providing daily updates for staff on the continued changing situation.</p>	
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Housing Issues, Department for Communities</p> <p>Mr Paul Price and Mr David Polley gave a detailed monthly update on the Department for Communities Housing Issues, under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Newbuild starts <p>The commitment is to provide an additional 1,850 social homes starts by March 2020 of which 200 will be shared housing and 8.5% will be wheelchair accessible. Progress towards the commitment is progressing as would be expected at this time towards the end of the financial year, with 515 units on site.</p>	

	<p>The Housing Executive continues to engage with the developing housing associations in bringing forward planned schemes.</p> <p>Responding to a question in relation to an underspend in the budget, Mr Price explained to aim is to meet the target of 1850 social homes starts and to spend this year's budget of £146m, he added that you could meet the target and still underspend in the financial year and the money would be handed back to Treasury, but would not necessarily impact on the bid for next year's newbuild budget.</p> <p>It was explained that there some early strategic planning for the newbuild programme and there is a 3 year programme, currently with the Minister which the Housing Executive sets out schemes identified with areas of housing need and they have nominated a Housing Association to take it forward. He added there is always a surge of activity in last quarter of each financial year, within the newbuild programme to meet the targets and spend the budget.</p> <p>Mr Bailie welcomed Members continued support in planning applications for newbuild schemes presented to Councils and added that it was also appreciated that some Councils, as part of the conditions for private developments, is that planning permissions for new schemes is to include at least 20% social and affordable homes within the scheme and possibly a developer contribution would also be welcomed.</p> <p>A map was requested showing the locations of the newbuild starts programme over the 11 Council areas.</p> <p>It was suggested that a representative from NIFHA should be invited to a future meeting, to give a presentation on Housing Associations newbuild programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-ownership• Programme for Social Reform <p>It was noted that the Ministers has been briefed on the options for structural reform have been developed for Ministers in order to address the investment challenge in the NIHE.</p> <p>New Decade, New Approach commits Ministers to tackling this challenge and we have started considering how. A two-part solution is required. The first part is a long-term programme of rent increases; the second a large injection of capital funding as soon as possible and sustained over a number of years. A solution must be agreed and implemented. If it is not, then the alternative must be the loss from social supply of significant parts of the NIHE portfolio.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p>
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	<p>This would compound greatly with the already-rising levels of housing stress.</p> <p>Mr Price undertook to provide for the next meeting the document titled 'New Decade, New Approach' for Members discussion. He highlighted the six key areas within the document</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Commitment to tackle Housing Executive investment issue;2. Commitment to increase the number of social newbuild;3. Commitment to increase the Housing Executive's rent sustainably;4. Housing Associations;5. ONS;6. Commitment to Programme for Government, a specific housing outcome. <p>Members would have the opportunity at the next Meeting to discuss the issues in detail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy <p>It was reported that the Department has completed analysis of respondents' views in relation to the review and a consultation report has been drafted for publication. In December 2019 NIHE presented to the Department preliminary plans and potential costings to implement all 20 proposals for change, The plan is subject to Department approvals and funding and further consideration of modelling. Minister is currently considering way forward options for implementation and the outcome is awaited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NI ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 -2020 <p>The Housing Executive's bid to the NI ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 -2020 to secure funding to improve energy efficiency within its stock. The funding and programme is currently being rolled out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reclassification of Northern Ireland Social Housing Providers <p>By 31 March 2020 the aim is to work with the Northern Ireland Office to ensure the passage of legislation to maintain the classification of Northern Ireland's Registered Housing Associations to the private sector. The draft Bill completed. In line with "New Decade, New Approach" minister intends to bring forward legislation as soon as possible to facilitate reversal of the Office for National Statistics' classification of Housing Associations as Non-Financial Public Corporations.</p>	<p>P Price</p>
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In response to a query in regard to the delay of the Bill, Mr Price explained that a delay poses a threat to the newbuild programme, as the Bill will not take effect by the end of this financial year and a mitigation extension will be required. The other issue is the eligibility of Housing Associations financial transactions capital, it may result in the Department having to inject capital into their budget, which would have to be taken from other budgets.

- Supporting People Delivery Strategy

The Housing Executive are working on a three year Strategy to bring about substantial change to the existing SP Programme in the form of the 2020-23 Strategy, for consultation. Mechanisms are now in place to develop a suitable Strategic Needs Assessment and a timeline developed which concludes with plans to publish in September 2020. A Standardised Regional Rates proposal, is currently with the Minister for approval. Setting the Supporting People budget for next year, it was noted that this budget has always been protected over the years, and await the Ministers decision on the budget.

- Homelessness Strategy

Work is continuing with the Housing Executive and across Government on Year 2 of the Interdepartmental Action Plan. Most actions are on track to complete. Departments are starting work on the third iteration of the Plan. A report on Year 2 and an Action Plan for Year 3 should be published in June 2020. The review of temporary accommodation (NIHE) is ongoing and the Housing Executive are currently considering the final report. In relation to Chronic Homelessness Action Plan (NIHE), a paper following consultation on the draft Action Plan. It was noted that finalisation of any changes resulting from the consultation are currently being completed and the finalised document is expected to be uploaded to the NIHE website in March 2020.

- St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena

- Regulation of the Private Rented Sector

Landlord Helpline underway as of 01/09/18. Pilot mediation service provided by Housing Rights Service is operational from November 19 for a period of 2 years. A meeting of the consultative working group has been reconvened in order to review the proposals and key issues raised during the Private Rented Sector review which closed in 2017. Proposals for the way forward will have to be agreed with Minister.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Housing Supply Housing Division continues to engage in discussions with Councils, Housing Executive, Housing Associations and other stakeholders with a particular focus on areas of ongoing and planned mixed tenure developments and affordable housing. It is anticipated that this work will complement the development of a broader Housing Supply Strategy, subject to Ministerial approval, with the specific aim of turning the curve on housing stress and housing supply. • Affordable Warmth Scheme The Affordable Warmth Scheme aims to deliver 3,900 affordable warmth measures to 2,600 homes by 31 March 2020. The Scheme is on track to meet this target. Referring to Officers in Council who are responsible to administering the scheme highlighted the challenges of delivering the referrals which is 'labor intensive' work to get them processed, and it would help if there was some form of advertising within those targeted areas, as opposed to relying on Officers having to 'cold call' to promote the scheme. Mr Polley acknowledged the comments made. • NIHE Rent Scheme The Minister approved the increase of NIHE rents at Consumer Price Index (CPI) + 1% on 6 February 2020. The increase will come into effect from 1 April 2020. • Welfare Reform Mitigation payments Mitigation for the Social Sector Size Criteria (also referred to as the Bedroom Tax) will be extended. 	
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PRESENTATION

<p>7.0</p>	<p>Housing Executive's Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey</p> <p>Members received a presentation by Shauna Mulgrew on the Housing Executive's Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS). (Copies of the Slides are appended to these minutes – Appendix A).</p> <p>Members learned that the CTOS provides extensive and up-to-date information on the Housing Executive's tenant population and a valuable insight into attitudes to, and satisfaction with, Housing Executive services.</p>	
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	<p>It is a vital source of information, not only for guiding the development of public sector housing policy, but also for quality assessments and monitoring performance, and helping the organisation to assess the extent to which we are achieving the four high level outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan 2017/18-2020/2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people find housing support and solutions • Delivering better homes • Fostering vibrant, sustainable communities • Delivering quality public services <p>The CTOS also plays a vital role in delivering, at a Regional and Area level, housing management performance-related data on key service areas. This data helps the Housing Executive to concentrate attention on areas of weaker performance and provides a consistent basis for monitoring and comparing performance, in keeping with the organisation’s objectives of improving services and retaining its position as a high performing landlord.</p> <p>Additionally, the Survey contributes to the measurement of business improvement activity and the quality of services delivered to our tenants, as findings from the CTOS support the Housing Executive’s applications for the EQFM Excellence Model, Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award and the NI Quality Award. The Survey also identifies areas where the quality of services needs to be improved.</p> <p>Ms Mulgrew highlighted the key findings of the survey.</p> <p>In response to a question raised in relation to benchmarking against Housing Associations, it was explained that Housing Associations are not directly comparable, but it was noted that some Housing Associations include statistical findings in their Annual Reports.</p> <p>Several Members commended the Housing Executive on their high level of customer satisfaction.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Ms Mulgrew for her useful presentation.</p>	
<p>8.0</p>	<p>Housing Executive’s Community Safety Strategy 2020/2023</p> <p>A presentation was received by Jill Smyth on the Housing Executive’s Community Safety Strategy 2020/2023. (Copies of the Slides are appended to these minutes – Appendix B).</p>	

	<p>Ms Smyth explained that it is the Housing Executive’s responsibility is to ensure communities are safe and anti-social behaviour is tackled appropriately. The Housing Executive is dedicated to tackling anti-social behaviour in all its forms. The goal is ultimately to improve the quality of people’s lives.</p> <p>The Strategy outlines the key achievements of the Housing Executive over the lifetime of the previous strategy ‘Safer Together’; to help tackle anti-social behaviour and alleviate the fear of crime in communities. It sets out what will be done over the next three years to continue this work.</p> <p>The Housing Executive has worked and will continue to work across government with our statutory partners and build on the well established relationships with voluntary and community based agencies to intervene and reduce anti-social behaviour in communities.</p> <p>The Strategy focuses on the importance of working together to realise change and highlights the important role that the Community play. Ultimately the aim is to empower communities, build greater community confidence, raise community safety awareness and improve support to those who are vulnerable within our communities.</p> <p>The Housing Executive will continue to take a proactive approach by investing in local initiatives through the Community Safety funding programme as a preventative measure to ensure community safety, deal with local issues, create safer communities, lessen the fear of crime and build community confidence.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Ms Smyth for a very informative presentation.</p>	
<p>9.0</p>	<p>Social Housing Development Programme - Progress Report February 2020</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
<p>10.0</p>	<p>The Housing Executive’s Scheme Starts February 2020</p> <p>Members noted the reports.</p>	

11.0	Date and Venue of Next Meeting – Thursday, 9th April 2020 in the Island, Lisburn Council offices	
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The Meeting concluded at 12.45 pm.