



**Minutes of the 493<sup>rd</sup> Meeting  
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on  
Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at 10 am in the  
Boardroom, the Housing Centre and via Zoom**

**Present**

Councillor M Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough (Vice Chair)
Alderman A Bresland	Derry & Strabane Council
Alderman T Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough
Councillor C Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough
Councillor M Ruane	Newry, Mourne & District
Alderman A Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City

**In Attendance**

Mr P Price	Director of Social Housing Policy & Oversight, DfC
Mr D Polley	Director, Housing Supply Policy, DfC
Ms G Long	Chief Executive
Mr B O'Kane	Assistant Director, Housing Services
Mr E Jones	Senior Principal Officer, Finance, Audit and Assurance
Miss M McLaughlin	Senior Executive Officer

**Apologies**

Councillor A Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Chair)
Councillor M Kelly	Belfast City
Alderman J Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough

<b>1.0</b>	<p><b><u>Welcome &amp; Apologies</u></b></p> <p>The above apologies were noted and it was agreed that Cllr Cooper would chair the meeting. Cllr Cooper welcomed Paul Price and David Polley from the Department for Communities and from the Housing Executive, Grainia Long, Brian O'Kane and Eamon Jones.</p>	
<b>2.0</b>	<p><b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b></p> <p>There were no Declarations of Interest.</p>	
<b>3.0</b>	<p><b>To adopt the Minutes of the 492<sup>nd</sup> Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 11<sup>st</sup> August 2022</b></p> <p>It was proposed by Alderman Grehan, seconded by Alderman Nicholl and resolved, that the Minutes of the 492<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	<b>Chair</b>

<b>4.0</b>	<b><u>Matters Arising</u></b>  There were no matters arising.	
<b>5.0</b>	<b><u>Forward Workplan</u></b>  The forward workplan was noted.	

6.0

## Report from the Housing Executive's Chief Executive, Grainia Long on Housing Executive Business

Ms Long spoke in detail to her circulated report, which provided the Housing Council with an update summarising a range of strategic, major or routine matters, including any emerging issues. A summary of the current / emerging issues were outlined under the headings as follows:-

- Planned Maintenance Contracts – Update
- Response Maintenance – Update
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Housing Benefit / Low Income Rate Relief Owner Occupier Project Update
- Housing Investment Plans (HIPs)
- Replacement Services for Women Experiencing Chronic Homelessness
- Supporting People Funding 2022/23
- Sustainable Development Strategy Update
- NIHE Corporate Plan
- Return to the Workplace, Future Working Practices and Accommodation Strategy
- Industrial Action and Pay Claims for 2022-23
- Pay and Grading Review
- Fundamental Review of Allocations (FRA)
- Ukrainian Resettlement Programme
- Homelessness
- Belfast City Centre Deaths

Cllr Cooper asked if he could have a copy of the Cost of Living paper submitted to the Board Committee and it was agreed that a presentation and updated paper on the Cost of Living would be provided to the next Housing Council meeting.

Cllr Cooper thanked Ms Long for her detailed report and added his appreciation to staff for the ongoing communication, at local level, regarding Response and Planned Maintenance.

GL

**7.0****Presentation on Homelessness**

Mr B O’Kane gave gave Members a presentation on Homelessness. (Copies of the Presentation are appended to these minutes – Appendix A).

Mr O’Kane provided an update on the following:

- Homelessness Strategy 2022-21 Objectives
- Key Challenges to Delivery
- Baseline Programme
- Funding Challenges
- Numbers of Annual Presentations and Acceptances
- Impact of Cost of Living on homelessness presentations
- Northern Ireland Rental Index statistics
- Numbers of Households and Individuals in Temporary Accommodation
- Key Challenges with Temporary Accommodation
- Key Challenges in respect of Voluntary Sector
- Success of a Proactive Approach – Homeless Prevention Fund 2021/22

Cllr Cooper thanked Mr O’Kane for a very comprehensive and informative presentation and invited questions from Members.

Alderman Grehan commented that a potential solution may be the extension of Temporary Accommodation over a longer term, and take on responsibility of maintenance of those properties. Ms Long agreed that this would be an ideal solution and added that other pressures have affected numbers this year.

Discussion took place on the reacquisition of housing stock including;

- buyback of properties, SHDP and VfM;
- pressures on funding allocation as no mechanisms in place;
- discussions with Department of Finance
- diminishing stock; and
- challenges of landlords selling property.

Further discussion took place on ‘hidden homelessness’.

Cllr Cooper added that the easiest solution would be providing the Housing Executive with the power to buyback properties.

Cllr Cooper asked what local councils could do to ease the pressure of homelessness. Mr O’Kane welcomed the offer of support from members and advised that it would be helpful if councils could signpost people to the Housing Executive’s Prevention Programme which details a range of support services as well as any local projects in the area.

Alderman Nicholl asked for Waiting List figures for his area as well as projected New Build figures. Ms Long provided an update on the current waiting list, as well as a breakdown on numbers in housing stress, which was being impacted on by the sale of Housing Executive stock.

Ms Long added that community planning, at a local level, is critical in identifying sites for social housing and the need for at least 20% social housing on development sites is crucial to reduce homelessness and those in housing stress.

	<p>She further added that the partnership building is important and that Councils need to provide new products which the Housing Executive would co-fund.</p> <p>Discussion took place on the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Executive's Rural Strategy and Latent Demand Testing and it was noted the Department for Communities and Housing Executive work together on this</li> <li>• Role of Housing Associations in rural areas</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Cooper advised that Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Council would be available to facilitate any pilot schemes.</p> <p><b>AGREED:</b> that (1) Temporary Accommodation costs would be provided at the next meeting; and (2) more information on Latent Demand Testing in rural areas.</p>	
8.0	<p><b><u>Housing Starts – August 2022</u></b></p> <p>Members noted the Report.</p>	
9.0	<p><b><u>Invitation to the Launch of the Co-Own for over 55's</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that Amanda Grehan had registered to attend the event. Mark Conway to confirm by the end of the week if he was available to attend.</p>	MC
10.0	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	
11.0	<p><b><u>Date of next Meeting</u></b></p> <p>The next Housing Council Meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 10 am – venue to be confirmed.</p> <p>An apology from Mark Cooper was noted.</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 11.25 am.

## Update on Homelessness

Housing Council  
8<sup>th</sup> September 2022  
Brian O’Kane



## Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 Objectives

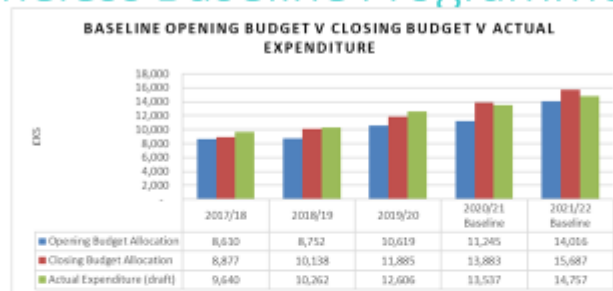


## Key Challenges to delivery



- Funding - insufficient to plan successful deliver of objectives
- Continued / sustained homelessness demand
- Housing supply; permanent and temporary
- Impact of current buoyant housing market and cost of living
- Staff recruitment and retention challenges
- Level of complexity of needs of those experiencing homelessness; requiring additional support

## Homeless Baseline Programme



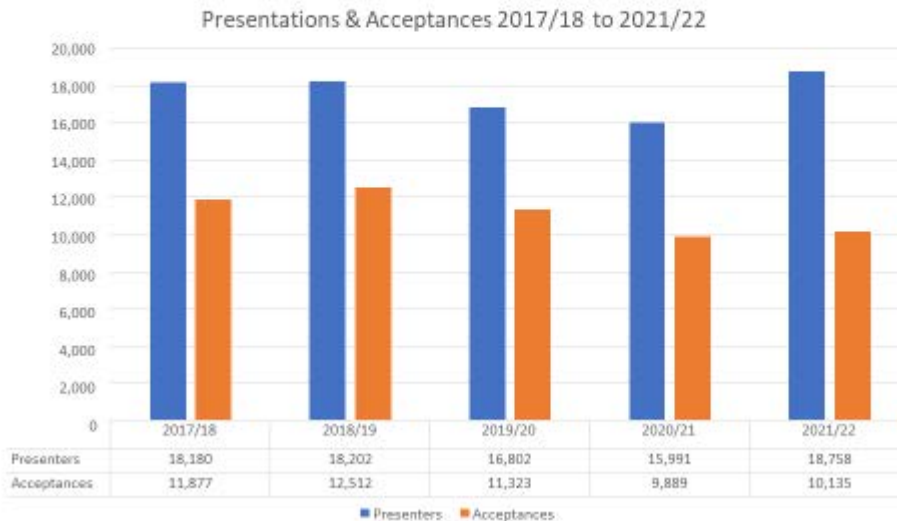
- Each Year opening budget allocations (exc. COVID-19 allocations) fall short of expenditure:
  - **2017/2018** - £1,030k
  - **2018/2019** - £1,510k
  - **2019/2020** - £1,987k
  - **2020/2021** - £2,292k (representing 17% of baseline programme)
  - **2021/2022\*** - £740k (representing 5% of baseline programme - closing budget allocation includes £695k of Covid-19 funding allocated to baseline)

## Funding Challenges



- **Absence of multi-year Budget** is causing real issues in planning and delivery of Homeless Strategy
- Housing Executive is currently **operating at risk** and lack of funding will lead to inability to deliver several key actions in year 1 Action Plan
- Current level of **indicative opening allocations is insufficient** to plan the successful deliver of the Homeless programme
- Significant and real challenge is in finding budget for:
  - homelessness prevention and
  - strategic programmes e.g. Complex Lives and Housing First

## Annual Presentations & Acceptances





## Impact of cost of living on presentation reason

Homeless Presenters				
Homeless Reason	2019-2020 Presenters	2020-2021 Presenters	2021-2022 Presenters	2022-2023 Quarter 1 Presenters
ANR: Financial hardship	233	152	160	40
LOPRA: affordability	394	194	203	52
LOPRA: fitness/repairs	84	51	83	22
LOPRA: landlord dispute	198	158	152	63
LOPRA: other	559	361	492	177
LOPRA: property sale	871	565	1380	506
Loss of HA accom: arrears	25	4	5	4
Loss of NIHE accom: arrears	31	5	5	4
Loss of private rented accommodation	6	0	0	2
Mortgage Arrears	89	31	47	12
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2490</b>	<b>1521</b>	<b>2527</b>	<b>882</b>
<b>Percentage of N.I total Homeless Presenters</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>22%</b>

### Northern Ireland

Rental Index H2 2021

General Market Trends

**£717**  
AVERAGE RENT

**6.9%**  
ANNUALLY

**2%**  
HALF YEAR Y

The Rental Index Q4 2021

**133.2**  
RENTAL INDEX

Average Rent by Property Type

SEMI-DETACHED PROPERTIES: £732

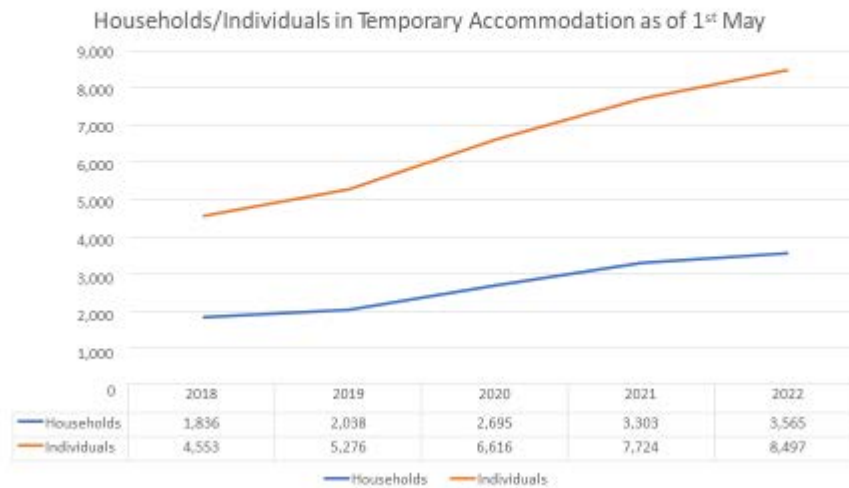
DETACHED: £929

FLAT (1/2 TOWNHOUSES): £678

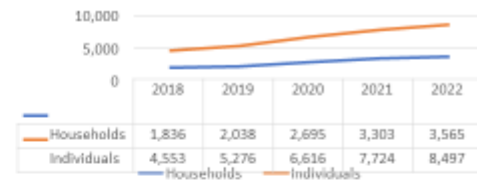
Rental Performance by Region

AVDAGI CHT H2 2021	AVDAGI CHT H2 2021
Armagh & Tyrone	1455
Belfast	1775
Down	1644
East Antrim	1715
East Down	1715
East Londonderry	1715
Fermanagh & Tyrone	1715
Glenties, Carrick & Glenties	1715
Larne & Carrickfergus	1715
Lisburn & Castlereagh	1715
Lisburn & Castlereagh	1715
Mid & East Antrim	1715
Mid Down	1715
Mid Ulster	1715
North Antrim & Down	1715

## Households and Individuals in Temporary Accommodation



## Key Challenges Temp Acc



- Sustained heightened demand
- Throughput has improved but not to pre-COVID levels
- Supply is limited; permanent and temporary
- Increase in homelessness due to loss of private rental accommodation due to increased property sales
- COVID impact has resulted in Housing Services increasing spend on temporary accommodation
- Increased usage of expensive non-standard accommodation to meet demand

## Key Challenges in respect of Voluntary Sector

- Housing Executive only able to give **three months certainty** to homelessness sector providers; impacts on length of contracts
- Homeless Services Provider staff **recruitment and retention challenges**:
  - Recent Homeless Connect Research noted "Overall, the evidence presented paints the picture of an extremely vulnerable service, requiring immediate recognition, investment and support if it is to continue to offer the much needed services it delivers"
- Level of **complexity of needs** of those experiencing homelessness; requiring additional support
- Clarity is also needed on funding for the Supporting People Programme

## Shifting the balance



## Successes of a proactive approach: Homeless Prevention Fund 2021/22

- 47 projects supported (£1.4m)
  - 2,503 individuals benefited from high-level interventions ○
  - 5,095 individuals benefited from short-term interventions ○
  - 1,398 individuals attended training / awareness sessions
- Top three outcomes reported:
  - Support to sustain existing accommodation
  - Supported to manage health
  - Reduction in isolation
  - Accessed services to feel secure
  - Accessed financial advice