



**Note of the 502<sup>nd</sup> Meeting  
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on  
Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 10.30 am in the  
Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast or via  
Zoom**

**Present**

Cllr Aaron Skinner	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council (In the Chair)
Cllr Mary O'Dowd	Armagh City, Banbridge, & Craigavon Borough Council
Cllr Paul McCusker	Belfast City Council
Cllr Niamh Archibald	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Ald Keith Kerrigan	Derry & Strabane District Council
Cllr Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Cllr Cathal Mallaghan	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Aoife Finnegan	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

**In Attendance:**

Paul Price	Department for Communities
Billy Crawford	Department for Communities
Grainia Long	Chief Executive, NIHE (Left meeting @ 11.55 am)
Jonny Blease	Head of Corporate Communications, NIHE
John McCandless	Senior Communications Manager, NIHE
Jennifer Hawthorne	Director of Housing Services, NIHE (Left meeting at 12 noon)
Brian O'Kane	NIHE
Anthony Lavery	NIHE
Eilbhlin Collins	NIHE
Deborah Reid	NIHE
Richard Tanswell	NIHE
Andrea Mills	Senior Executive Assistant, External Engagement, NIHE
Kelly Cameron	Secretary to the Housing Council, NIHE

**Apologies:**

Cllr Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Cllr Janice MacArthur	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Ald Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
David Polley	Department for Communities

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Aaron Skinner Chaired the Meeting. He welcomed Members, Officials from the Department for Communities and from the Housing Executive.</p> <p>In particular, he welcomed Alderman Keith Kerrigan (Derry &amp; Strabane District Council) to his first meeting since his appointment to the Housing Council.</p>	
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1.1	<p><b>Condolences</b></p> <p>Members learned of the sad passing of the Chair Mark Cooper's Mum. On behalf of Members, the Secretary undertook to send a letter of condolence to Councillor Cooper.</p>	Secretary
2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interests</b></p> <p>There were no declarations.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b></p> <p>Proposed by: Councillor Mary O'Dowd Seconded by: Councillor Aoife Finnegan.</p> <p><b>Note of the Housing Council Away Day on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023</b></p> <p>Proposed by; Councillor Mary O'Dowd Seconded by: Councillor Aoife Finnegan</p>	
4. 4.1 4.2 4.3	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b></p> <p><b>Page 2 Item 3 – Presentations</b></p> <p>Members had received copies of the three presentations given at the last Meeting.</p> <p><b>Page 2 Item 3.1 – Assessing Housing Need/Increasing Housing Supply</b></p> <p>(1) Letters had been sent to the 11 Council's in relation to affordable/social housing through their planning system. Members were asked to follow this up with their Councils and respond to the Secretary on the request.</p> <p>(2) Members were encouraged to identify land suitable and available for social housing or to identify derelict properties etc. within their Council areas.</p> <p>The above items are ongoing and are on the key objective progress report.</p> <p><b>Page 3 Item 3.2 – Temporary Accommodation</b></p> <p>As requested, Members had received a breakdown by local Council area of temporary accommodation in each area, for their information.</p>	Members

<p><b>4.4</b></p>	<p><b>Page 3 Item 3.2 – Forward Workplan</b></p> <p>An updated forward workplan had been circulated, for Members information.</p>	
<p><b>4.5</b></p>	<p><b>Page 4 Item 5.2 – Schedule of Meetings</b></p> <p>Members had received a schedule of forthcoming meetings, for their information.</p>	
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Update by Paul Price &amp; Billy Crawford from the Department for Communities (DfC) on Housing Top Issues</b></p> <p>Paul Price &amp; Billy Crawford gave an update on the latest position under each of the following DfC’s commitments:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide an additional 1500 social homes by March 2024 of which 200 will be shared housing and 10% will be wheelchair accessible;</li> <li>• Complete preparations and present Minister with advice on viable options to tackle the significant investment challenge and address the maintenance backlog which is faced by the Housing Executive;</li> <li>• To develop way forward policy options and legislative proposals in response to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy;</li> <li>• NIHE Regional Budget;</li> <li>• Non ACM Cladding Remediation Scheme;</li> <li>• Discretionary Housing Payment Deliver 4,422 new shared ownership homes by March 2024 (<i>via £158 million in Financial Transactions Capital funding</i>);</li> <li>• Develop new affordable housing options (Intermediate Rent);</li> <li>• To work with the Housing Executive and across Government to implement the Homelessness Strategy (PFG target) to tackle homelessness;</li> <li>• To implement the first phase of PRS reform as encapsulated in the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022. To implement the first phase of PRS reform as encapsulated in the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022;</li> <li>• Deliver 4,117 affordable warmth measures to 2,745 homes by 31 March 2024 through the Affordable Warmth Scheme;</li> <li>• Deliver a Housing Supply Strategy and Action Plan (s) to provide a framework for the delivery of the homes we need over the next 15 years;</li> <li>• In response to the Climate Act DfC will lead on the Residential element of the ‘Residential and Buildings Sector Plan’.</li> </ul> <p>An update was also given on the recent Hate Crime in various estates around the Province, in relation to allocations.</p> <p>Members welcomed the annual presentations to Councils on the Housing Investment Plans but agreed that it would be useful to educate people ‘on the ground’ on how the housing selection scheme works and provide them with statistical information through certain social media platforms.</p>	

	<p>It was requested for a breakdown of social housing newbuild starts by Council area.</p> <p>In relation to Affordable Warmth scheme, Members requested statistical information comparing the figures from Council referrals in targeted areas against the new self-referral presented to the Housing Executive.</p> <p>Members were assured that there has been no change to the eligibility criteria. It was suggested that at the next Meeting, David Polley could explain why the Scheme was moved from local Councils to the Housing Executive and the Housing Executive can give an update on the transition period and provide data over the next few months.</p>	<p>DfC</p> <p>DfC</p> <p>D Polley</p> <p>HE</p>
6.	<p><b>Presentations on Homelessness</b> (In attendance - Jennifer Hawthorne, Deborah Reid, Brian Kane, Anthony Lavery, Richard Tanswell &amp; Eibhlin Collins).</p> <p>Members received very detailed presentations under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of Homelessness</li> <li>• Temporary Accommodation</li> <li>• Homewards Programme</li> <li>• Youth Homelessness</li> <li>• Refugee &amp; Asylum Seekers</li> </ul> <p>In response to Councillor Finnegan's question in relation to Full Duty Applicants (FDA) receiving benefits and who are required to move in with someone for a short period of time on a temporary basis, DfC undertook to check the length of time the claimant will be in receipt or retain their benefits.</p> <p>Councillor McClusker had submitted a question prior to the meeting regarding Belfast Housing Solutions and staff unable to answer all housing queries in relation to temporary accommodation and existing housing applications. He added that the lack of temporary accommodation options is putting the most vulnerable at risk resulting in an increase in rough sleeping. He expressed his grave concern at the lack of accommodation for those who present as homeless, he asked for a review of the current provision and working with all providers to utilise resources which will help to ensure that those who are homeless access the support they need.</p> <p>Councillor McCusker was satisfied that his question and concerns were addressed through the presentations.</p> <p>Referring to her local Housing Executive office, Councillor O'Dowd commended the work of the Housing Executive staff, particularly when they are clearly under resourced at a challenging time.</p>	<p>DfC</p>

	<p>Members were in agreement that the Housing Council should be working more closely with Housing Associations in the future and building a working partnership with them similar to what has been established with the Housing Executive.</p> <p>Following discussions in relation to the homeless budget and resources spent on areas such as ie hotels, B&amp;B's, taxis etc, suggestions were made that the Housing Council could address solutions &amp; options of redirecting those funds and looking for more suitable accommodation.</p> <p>It was noted that Members continually support the Housing Executive Revitalisation programme, being able to borrow money and returning to build homes.</p> <p>In response to Councillor Skinner's question in relation to the option using a finance provider to purchase properties on behalf of the Housing Executive to provide imminent temporary accommodation. Catherine McFarland assured Members that the Housing Executive are exploring all avenues for obtaining suitable accommodation.</p> <p>It was reiterated to Members to identify any available properties etc. within their Council areas to the Housing Executive, which may potentially be suitable for temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Alderman Kerrigan noted that the development of 6 HMO's units in Belfast were being utilized for temporary accommodation, and he asked if it was the intention to develop the programme beyond Belfast. In response Ms Reid noted that the current 6 units are a test and learn approach and are in the final stages of developing the business case to use in HMO's generally in Belfast and Derry to reflect where the greatest need is, in the future the Housing Executive may expand to other areas.</p> <p>Members expressed the length of time 'Change of Tenancy' can take and felt that if this was a more speedy process in relation to the maintenance of the property, it may eliminate the length of time in using temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Members thanked the Presenters for their time and giving a very useful and comprehensive presentations.</p> <p>It was noted that Members will go and consider 'setting objectives following the presentation on homelessness and how the Housing Council can make an impact' and will report back at a future Meeting on their findings.</p>	<p><b>Members</b></p> <p><b>Members</b></p>
	<p>Nicole Lappin, Chair of the Housing Executive joined the meeting to introduce herself and to welcome those new Members whom she hadn't met since their appointment to the Housing Council and said she looked forward to working with the Housing Council and the four who will be appointed on the Housing Executive Board, in the future.</p>	

<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Homelessness - Setting Objectives and how the Housing Council can make an Impact</b></p> <p>It was agreed that this item should be deferred to the next Housing Council 'In Committee' Meeting in December.</p> <p>Following the presentation received on Homelessness, Members were asked to give consideration to the setting of objectives, prior the next meeting.</p>	<p><b>Secretary</b></p> <p><b>Members</b></p>
<p><b>8.</b></p> <p><b>8.1</b></p>	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p><b>Committee Membership</b></p> <p>It was agreed that Cathal Mallaghan and Mary O'Dowd would to swap Committees. Therefore, Cathal will now sit on the Standing Orders Committee and Mary will sit on the Awards Committee.</p> <p>It was agreed that Keith Kerrigan will replace his predecessor (Allan Bresland) on the Awards Committee.</p>	<p><b>Secretary</b></p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Date of next Meeting</u></b></p> <p>The next Meeting will be held on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 in the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown in person or via Zoom.</p> <p>It was noted that this meeting will be for Members only from 11 am to 12.45, followed by a Christmas Lunch for Members &amp; Officers.</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 2.40 pm