



**Minutes of the 505th Meeting
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on
Thursday 11th April 2024 at 10.30 am in the
Housing Centre, Belfast**

Present

Cllr Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council (Chair)
Cllr Aaron Skinner	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council (Vice Chair)
Cllr Mary O’Dowd	Armagh City, Banbridge, & Craigavon Borough Council
Ald Keith Kerrigan	Derry & Strabane District Council
Cllr Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Ald Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Cllr Cathal Mallaghan	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Aoife Finnegan	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

In Attendance:

David Polley	Director, Housing Supply Policy (DfC)
Heloise Brown	Director, Housing & Sustainability (DfC)
Grainia Long	Chief Executive, NIHE
Jonny Blease	Head of Communications, NIHE
Paul Isherwood	Director of Asset Management, NIHE
Andy Kennedy	Assistant Director of Asset Management, NIHE
Andrea Mills	Senior Executive Assistant, External Engagement, NIHE
Kelly Cameron	Secretary to the Housing Council, NIHE

Apologies:

Cllr Janice MacArthur	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Cllr Sean McGlinchey	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

-1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair, welcomed the Members and Officers from the Department for Communities (DfC) and Housing Executive to the Meeting.</p>	
1.1	<p>Appointment of three Housing Council Members to the Housing Executive Board</p> <p>The Chair congratulated the three successful Housing Council members appointed to the Housing Executive Board - Paul McCusker, Keith Kerrigan & Cathal Mallaghan and looked forward to a two-way channel being developed.</p> <p>It was noted that there remains one vacancy on the Board from the Housing Council and the Chair reported that he will be seeking a meeting with the Department to discuss further.</p>	Chair

1.2	<p>It had also been agreed at the 'closed session' earlier that future 'closed sessions' on a bi-monthly basis will give the three Board Members the opportunity to update Members on the Board's deliberations.</p> <p>Causeway Coast & Glens – Councillor Sean McGlinchy</p> <p>It was noted that Councillor Sean McGlinchey has replaced Councillor Niamh Archibald for Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council. His apology was noted for this meeting.</p>	Secretary
1.3	<p>Councillor Janice MacArthur (Ards & North Down Borough Council)</p> <p>The Chair informed Members that he had received a text from Councillor Janice MacArthur confirming that she is resigning as a Councillor due to ill health. The Secretary undertook to send a letter of thanks and well wishes.</p>	Secretary
2.	<p>Declarations of Interests</p> <p>There were no declarations.</p>	
3.	<p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 8th February 2024</p> <p>Proposed by: Councillor Mary O'Dowd Seconded by: Councillor Cathal Mallaghan</p> <p>Minutes were approved.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>4.1 Meeting with the CEO of NIFHA</p> <p>Secretary to arrange a meeting with the Chef Executive from NIFHA as an introduction and to discuss collaborative working and shared goals.</p> <p>4.2 Housing Council Awards Committee</p> <p>It was noted that a meeting of the Awards Committee was held on 14th March to discuss revitalising the Housing Councils approach to Awards going forward.</p> <p>Research on various options had been presented to the Awards Committee, the option of Sponsorship of Awards at major housing award events was discussed. Benefits to sponsoring an Awards would be to acknowledge the work of teams and individuals working in the housing field and raise the profile of the Housing Council by attending Award Ceremony's giving an opportunity to network and promote the Housing Council. The following options were discussed and approved by Members of the Awards:-</p>	

	<p>Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) for the Housing Hero Award This award celebrates the outstanding achievements of housing professionals, committee members and tenants, who have used new approaches to help solve housing problems they see around them; and</p> <p>The NIHE Rural Community Awards for two Cleaner and Greener Award in North and South Regions - This award celebrates the efforts that are made by rural communities to improve the outlook of their settlement and to encourage environmental sustainability.</p> <p>Other bodies can be considered in the future.</p> <p>Members were content to approve the sponsorship of the above two awards going forward.</p> <p>4.3 Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>Arrangements will be made for the new Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons to attend a future meeting.</p> <p>4.4 Regularity of Housing Council Meetings</p> <p>It had been agreed at the April Meeting, that the meetings should meet monthly, as from April onwards.</p> <p>Members agreed that every other meeting should be a closed session from 10 am to 10.30 am giving them the opportunity to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Key Priorities Progress Report current priorities and provide updates on progress made. • Reflect on previous presentations, to identify or set new objectives and/or topics for upcoming agenda. • Give the three Board Members the opportunity to discuss the Housing Executives Board deliberations. <p>The alternate bi monthly meetings to start at 10.30 am to 12.30 pm dedicated to the priority topic at hand.</p> <p>All meetings will provide the option to attend in person or via Zoom and should finish approximately at 12.30 pm with a light lunch.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Role of the Housing Council</p> <p>Heloise Brown gave an overview of the role of the Northern Ireland Executive and the role of the Housing Council.</p> <p>Ms Brown highlighted the key priorities of the Department for Communities and listed the Minister for Communities key priorities, as follows:-</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Supply Strategy • Delivering more social homes • Revitalisation of the Housing Executive • Tackling Homelessness • Supporting People programme • Climate change obligations • Building safety <p>Members welcomed the Ministers priorities and noted that the Housing Council has set out what their top strategic priorities are (Homelessness; Housing Supply & Stock Investment) and will be focusing on and advising and supporting the Minister, in due course.</p> <p>In response to Councillor Finnegan question as to why rural areas was not a priority by the Minister. Ms Long explained that the Housing Executive has a Rural Housing Strategy and targets newbuild and unfortunately this is a major challenge and target have not been meeting new builds in rural areas. Assurance was given that rural areas are addressed through the Housing Investment Plans presented to Council annually and through latent demand testing.</p> <p>It was agreed the Housing Investment Plans and Rural Housing Strategy to be circulated to Members, for their information.</p>	Secretary
6.	<p>Department for Communities – Housing Top Issues</p> <p>Councillor Grehan referred to the maintenance backlog and asked how the workforce and skills to carry out the backlog is being addressed.</p> <p>It is a challenging area, but there is a significant programme of work, backlog has continued due to several factors ie. lack of resources, rent freeze, COVID 19 and industrial action. A lot of work has been done over the last couple of years with the industry to build their capacity. GL reported that the Housing Executive held the 1st Engagement conference with the industry of approximately 150 Contractors in attendance, which was very successful and hopefully will continue as an annual event.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the delivery of housing supply and the recent workshop held and felt that Housing Council Members should have been invited to attend this event, Mr Polley explained that it was a joint Community Planning and local development planning workshop with Local Councils, DfC and NIHE. The workshop provided up to date information to Council officials on issues around housing need estimations, delivery of mixed tenure and available housing products. Plans are underway to organise a follow up seminar to which Housing Associations will be invited to discuss their delivery of schemes and to take a more detailed look at intermediate products and options for mixed tenure.</p> <p>D Polley assured Members there will be an opportunity for the Housing Council Members to attend a seminar/workshop, when it has been more progressed.</p>	D Polley

	<p>Concern was expressed by several Members on planning applications being rejected in areas where there is clearly a need for social and affordable housing.</p> <p>The Report was noted.</p>	
7.	<p>Update on Housing Executive's Emerging Issues & Strategic Items</p> <p>Grainia Long gave Members and update on Housing Executive's emerging issues and strategic items.</p>	
8.	<p>Presentation on Stock Investment – In attendance Paul Isherwood and Andy Kennedy</p> <p>P Isherwood highlighted the Housing Executive's Stock Investment issues and the services and programmes. Members noted the current strategic investment approach pending outcome of the Social Housing Reform Programme and the Housing Executive Revitalisation programme.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the update and it was noted that this was one the key areas that the Housing Council would be focusing on in the coming months and would be requiring further updates/presentations from the Asset Team on other areas of interest at future meetings.</p>	PI
9.	<p>Chartered Institute of Housing 'Housing Summit' in Liverpool from 9th-10th September 2024</p> <p>It was agreed that the following Members will represent the Housing Council at this Conference:</p> <p>Councillor Mark Cooper, Chair Councillor Aaron Skinner, Vice Chair Alderman Amanda Grehan.</p>	
10.	<p>Any Other Business</p>	
10.1	<p>Forthcoming Presentations/Site Visits</p> <p>Forthcoming Presentations and site visits identified throughout the meeting for inclusion on the forward workplan, are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royal Foundation Homewards Programme • NIHE Business Plan • Commissioning Prospectus • NIHE Rural Housing Strategy • Modular Homes Options • Building Safety including Damp & Mould Action Plan • Housing and Sustainability - Climate Change • Retrofit & RDF Schemes – Site Visit 	

<p>10.2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness – Temporary Accommodation • Youth Homelessness Action Plan • Domestic Violence Action Plan <p>Forthcoming Conferences</p> <p>It was agreed that the Secretary would identify housing related conferences which Members maybe interested in attending.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>
<p>10.3</p>	<p>Housing Council Website</p> <p>Members agreed that the importance of communicating through the Housing Council website what the Housing Council does and setting out their three priorities to be focused on throughout the year. The Chair to discuss further on the content of the website.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>Chair</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p><u>Date of next Meeting</u></p> <p>The next Meeting will be held on Thursday, 9th May 2024 at 10.30 am in the Braid, Ballymena in person or via Zoom.</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 1.30 pm