



**Note of the 503rd Meeting (In Committee)
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on
Thursday 14th December 2023 at 11.00 am in the
Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown**

Present

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| Cllr Mark Cooper | Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council (Chair) |
| Cllr Aaron Skinner | Mid & East Antrim Borough Council (Vice Chair) |
| Cllr Janice MacArthur | Ards & North Down Borough Council |
| Cllr Mary O'Dowd | Armagh City, Banbridge, & Craigavon Borough Council |
| Cllr Niamh Archibald | Causeway Coast & Glens 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:

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| Andrea Mills | Senior Executive Assistant, External Engagement, NIHE |
| Kelly Cameron | Secretary to the Housing Council, NIHE |

Apologies:

There were no apologies.

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| -1. | <p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair, welcomed the Members to the Meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Mark Cooper's thanked the Members for their kind words and condolences he received on the recent death of his Mother.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Declarations of Interests</p> <p>There were no declarations.</p> | |
| 3. | <p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 9th November 2023</p> <p>Proposed by: Councillor C Mallaghan Seconded by: Councillor M O'Dowd</p> | |

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| <p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> | <p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>Page 2 Item 4.2 – It was noted that letters had been sent to the 11 Council’s in relation to affordable/social housing through their planning system. (Two responses had been received to date). Members were encouraged to promote this at their Council meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed that all other matters arising and actions will be dealt with at the February Meeting.</p> <p>Flooding in Portadown</p> <p>Cllr O’Dowd expressed her disappointment, as she had not received a response from the Housing Executive in relation to her questions in regard to the recent flooding in Portadown. The Secretary undertook to follow up on this action.</p> <p>Affordable Warmth Scheme</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>Housing Associations</p> <p>Several Members expressed their disappointment at the lack of engagement and accountability between elected representatives and Housing Associations staff.</p> <p>It was noted that the Chair would arrange a future Meeting with a representative from NIFHA on a range of issues and extended the invitation to Members if they wish to attend along with him or alternatively email issues they wish him to raise at the meeting.</p> <p>Mary O’Dowd said she would like to attend the meeting.</p> | <p>All</p> <p>Secretary</p> <p>D Polley</p> <p>D Polley</p> <p>Secretary</p> |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Setting Objectives following the Homelessness presentation in November</p> <p>Following a detailed presentation at the November Housing Council meeting to focus and give a deep dive into homelessness and set objectives on how the Housing Council could impact and support these topics going forward.</p> <p>An in-depth discussion took place on housing need and potential opportunities to increase housing supply and their growing concern on the stark projected housing need for the next five years.</p> | |

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| | <p>Key areas identified were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members continually support the Housing Executive Revitalisation programme, being able to borrow money and returning to building homes; • Members supported the ability to purchase off-the-shelf properties and bring back to social housing; • The need for a joint approach across Local Councils, Housing Executive, Government department and developers is required; • Developers need to know the processes and policies across all councils and on how affordable housing products and policies work in practice; • Cross-border initiative working with the Irish Government on properties both sides of the border; • The option using a finance provider to purchase properties on behalf of the Housing Executive to provide imminent temporary accommodation; • 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; • In rural settings it is difficult to persuade developers to include a social element in their development. There is a challenge in trying to translate policy to what will be usually smaller settlements and developments; • Better understanding and the delivery of Intermediate Rents and Co-Ownership. <p>Agreed: Local Councils Head of Planners to be invited to attend the February Meeting along with the Housing Executive’s Place Shapers. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the way forward in relation to the 20% Social and Affordable Housing including, how do Planners propose this will be implemented and to include the issue of Intermediate Rents & Co-ownership.</p> | |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Housing Council Awards</p> <p>Following discussions, it was agreed that the current Housing Council Awards should be updated and to include a more community voluntary sector award.</p> <p>The Secretary to arrange an Awards Committee meeting in due course, to consider revitalising the Awards being presented; the format & structure of the ceremony and venues etc.</p> | <p>Secretary</p> |

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| | <p>The Awards Committee is as follows:</p> <p>Councillor Mark Cooper Councillor Aaron Skinner Alderman Amanda Grehan Councillor Mary O'Dowd Alderman Keith Kerrigan</p> | |
| 7. | <p>Housing Council Website</p> <p>Members welcomed the new branding of the website and commended it being more user friendly.</p> | |
| 8.0 | <p>Any Other Business</p> | |
| 8.1 | <p>The Northern Ireland Housing Executive builds first new houses in nearly 25 years - six semi-detached dwellings built at Sunningdale Gardens, North Belfast</p> <p>Members expressed disappointed that there were no representatives from the Housing Council invited to attend the launch of this scheme, as this was such a monumental event.</p> | |
| 8.2 | <p>Housing Selection Scheme</p> <p>Following a discussion on the Housing Selection Scheme, in particular intimidation points the consensus was that in some cases the system was being abused.</p> <p>Members requested a report/breakdown on how many persons received intimidation points over the past few years; the circumstances in which they were awarded these points for; and who deems the intimidation points are warranted in each case.</p> | Secretary |
| 9. | <p><u>Date of next Meeting</u></p> <p>The next Meeting will be held on Thursday, 8th February 2023 in the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council (Omagh Offices) in person or via Zoom.</p> <p>The Chair wished Members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.</p> | |

The Meeting concluded at 12.45 pm