



Minutes of the 506th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 9th May 2024 at 10.30 am in The Braid, Ballymena

Present

Ald Aaron Skinner	Cllr Mid & East Antrim Borough Council (Vice Chair) – Chairing meeting in Cllr Coopers absence
Cllr Mary O’Dowd	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Cllr Cathal Mallaghan	Mid Ulster District Council
Ald Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Cllr Aoife Finnegan	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Cllr Keith Kerrigan	Derry & Strabane District Council
Virtual	
Cllr Paul McCusker	Belfast City Council – left the meeting at 11.21 am

In Attendance:

Elma Newberry	Director of Regional Services (A) – NIHE
Jenny Williamson	Business Manager, Chair & CX Support Office - NIHE
Maria McLaughlin	Chair & CX Support Office – NIHE
Virtual	
Heloise Browne	Director Social Housing Policy and Oversight – DfC
Maryann Dempsey	Housing and Sustainability (HSG) - DfC

Apologies:

Cllr Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Cllr Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Cllr Sean McGlinchey	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and noted the apologies. He also welcomed Officers from the Department for Communities (DfC) and Housing Executive Officers to the Meeting.</p> <p>He reminded Members to switch off mobile phones until the end of the meeting.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None.</p>	
3.	<p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 11th April 2024</p> <p>Approved by: Cllr Amanda Grehan Seconded by: Cllr Mary O’Dowd</p> <p>Minutes approved.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>None.</p>	
5.	<p>Presentation on Housing Supply including Commissioning Prospectus</p> <p>Elma Newberry, Director of Regional Services (A), NIHE gave Members a presentation on the Commissioning Prospectus including Social & Intermediate Housing Requirements across Northern Ireland and added that it is the Housing Executive’s vision that everyone should be able to live in an affordable, sustainable and decent home that is appropriate to their needs, in a safe, attractive, and climate-resilient place. Members heard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic overview; • What is meant by Commissioning Prospectus; • Relationship of Commissioning Prospectus with Housing Need Assessment, Strategic Guidelines & Housing Supply; • Content of the Commissioning Prospectus; including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projected 5-year Social Housing Need ○ Urban and rural new starts targets ○ Shared Future Demand and Regeneration ○ Supported Housing Need ○ Wheelchair Housing Need ○ Irish Traveller Accommodation ○ Affordability – Intermediate Housing and Demand and ○ indicative housing mix • Projected social housing need – 2023-28 (by Local Government District); • Housing Need Assessments – Trends since 2015; • Trends in Projected social housing need; 	

- Trends in Household types in housing stress;
- Strategic Guidelines Compliance;
- New housing delivery at Council level;
- Increasing Social Housing Supply; and
- Commissioning Prospectus: Next Steps

Questions:

Plans for building social housing in Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council over the next few years rather than long term and the three year programme.

EN confirmed that there would be difficulties with restricted budgets regarding any newbuild housing and agreed that demand was high in Craigavon with a shortage of land. She confirmed the Housing Executive doesn't have oversight control of Housing Associations and relies on Housing Associations bringing forward sites. She advised the Housing Executive would review any lands they have and would encourage Housing Associations to do the same.

EN confirmed that she couldn't comment on what could be built in Craigavon within three years and added that the Housing Executive will liaise with Housing Associations. If there is an oversupply and limited budget the Housing Executive will look at guidelines and areas where demand is high will be given priority.

Projected Budget won't be sufficient to meet all services that need to be delivered

EN advised that all government departments were facing the same challenge especially on the Capital side and there is a lot of uncertainty around the budget. It was noted that discussions were ongoing.

Discussion also took place on the loss in the Private Rented Sector which had an impact on homelessness.

How the lack of sufficient budget for water or roads would affect any development plans?

EN advised that the Housing Executive is currently engaging in meetings with NI Water but that any budget cuts would also impact development as building cannot take place without sufficient water and road provisions.

Was the current model working well for tenants? Potential cuts to Housing Benefit may also impact.

EN agreed that the current model is currently challenging and that it would be difficult to continue to operate in the same way. The Housing Executive is currently involved in an Innovation Lab, with multiple stakeholders, to look at how to do things differently. The Housing Supply Strategy should also address some of these issues. However, there is a need to balance development costs, which are reviewed twice per annum, with investing in existing stock and exploring avenues such as the House Sales Scheme. As development costs continue to rise providing enough support to Housing Associations against a context of budget cuts.

	<p><i>How Planning Decisions Impact Development</i></p> <p>Local planning decisions could be making it more difficult to build in local areas which could have a knock-on effect on housing demand. EN agreed that they could look at when the decision was taken in Newry and Mourne and track if that had an impact on housing needs assessment or caused a spike in demand.</p> <p>The Chair thanked EN for her very informative and interesting presentation.</p> <p><i>Agreed actions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Housing demand in Newry and Mourne to be tracked post planning decisions in early 2024.</i> • <i>NIFHA to be invited to attend a future meeting.</i> 	
6.	<p>Department for Communities – Housing Top Issues</p> <p>Noted.</p>	
7.	<p>Agreed Presentation Topics for Upcoming Meetings</p> <p>Agreed: As Angus Kerr, DfC wasn't available for the June meeting it was agreed that The Royal Foundation – Homewards topic would be presented to the June Meeting and the Housing & Sustainability Climate Change would be presented to the September meeting.</p>	
8.	<p>Consultation – Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy</p> <p>Agreed: that this item should be revisited at the June meeting and a composite response to be submitted on behalf of the Housing Council.</p>	
9.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email from Housing Executive re: contact with local Housing Executive officers <p>Cllr Mallaghan commented on an email he had received from the Housing Executive asking that Councillors ceased contact with local Housing Executive officers, regarding operational constituent issues, and advising that all queries should go through Central Office. Further discussion ensued on the need for flexibility and quick communication with local offices to get issues resolved and this was unacceptable. The Director of Regional Services (A) undertook to look into this and report back.</p>	EN
10.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 13th June at 10.30 am in the Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast. Members to note there will be a closed session from 10.00 – 10.30 am following which the meeting will commence.</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 11.49 am