



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Correspondence</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>Council Meeting</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>2 February 2021</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>FOR DECISION</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Leader and Champion
Outcome	Establish key relationships with Government, agencies and potential strategic partners
Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>N/A</b>
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

Assessment (DPIA)	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
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## 1.0 **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to present correspondence for Members' consideration.

2.0 The following are listed:

### 2.1 **Northern Ireland Housing Council correspondence dated 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

The Minutes of The 475th Northern Ireland Housing Council meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and January Bulletin are attached for information.

### 2.2 **Fermanagh and Omagh District Council correspondence dated 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

At a Meeting of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council held on 1<sup>st</sup> December Council approved the following Motion:-

*"Due to the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council recognises the unprecedented stress that has been placed on this year's GCSE and A Level students.*

*This Council;*

*Notes that Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on some schools and pupils over others*

*Also acknowledges that those students that have had to study from home, within this district area, are faced with one of the worst broadband infrastructures on this island and therefore are left at a serious disadvantage to other students*

*Recognises that it is impossible to have a level playing field for exams to take place."*

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has written to the Minister of Education Peter Weir, the Executive office and all the Political Party leaders with in the Northern Assembly to ask that they follow the Welsh model of Assessment based on work throughout the year which can take into account whether a pupil has missed substantial periods of time due to self-isolation and removes entirely the risk of exams being cancelled at the last minute as they were this year.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council have asked the Education Authority to give a briefing at the Informal Meeting on 25 January 2020 specifically on counselling for young people in our schools at this time and in youth settings and to establish if there is any data or information beginning to emerge to show the burden on young people's mental health and their overall sense of wellbeing from the imposition of exams during a pandemic.

Members of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council urge Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to support Motion.

Correspondence attached.

### **2.3 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council correspondence dated 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

At a Meeting of Newry Mourne & Down District Council held on Monday 4 January 2021, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

*"That this Council recognises the importance of our National Health Service and the heroic contribution of our health and social care workers, and care home workers, throughout the pandemic; express our thanks for their commitment to the care for community and will write to the Executive asking them to administer a "thank you" payment of at least £500 as a practical demonstration of our gratitude.*

*The Council also calls for nursing registration and social care fees for 2021 to be waived in line with the sentiments expressed in this Motion and for this Council to write to and circulate this Motion to the other 10 Local Authorities seeking their support and writing also to the Executive calling for fee waivers to be implemented for this year".*

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council wrote to The Executive on this matter.

Newry Mourne and Down District Council urge Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to support Motion.

Correspondence attached.

### **2.4 Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards correspondence dated 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

Correspondence regarding accessing electronic communications from the Local Government Ethical Standards (LGES) Directorate.

Correspondence attached.

**2.5 Northern Ireland Local Government Association correspondence dated 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

NILGA Partnerships Panel Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> January Outcome Notes

The Northern Ireland Partnership Panel met for its first (virtual) meeting of 2021 on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021. This Outcomes Note is a draft provided by NILGA – Northern Ireland Local Government Association and is attached for information. A fuller version of outcomes and actions will follow in draft minutes.

**3.0 It is recommended** that Council consider the correspondence.



Minutes of the 475<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council  
The Housing Centre, Belfast or Conference Call via Webex  
Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 10.30 am

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**Present at Meeting:**

Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough (Chair)
Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

**Present by Video Conferencing**

Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Vice Chair)
Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Allan Bresland	Derry City & Strabane District
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City

**In Attendance:**

Clark Bailie	Chief Executive (NIHE)
Paul Price	Director of Social Housing Policy & Oversight (DfC)
David Polley	Director of Housing Strategy & Co-ordination (DfC)
Heloise Brown	Deputy Director of Social Housing Policy and Oversight (DfC)
Danny O'Reilly	Senior Principal Officer, PSIS (Housing Executive)
Kelly Cameron	Secretary (Housing Executive Secretariat)

**Apologies**

John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough

It was agreed that the Secretary write to Alderman Finlay to send best wishes and support following his recent operation.

1.0	<b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b>	
	None.	

2.0	<p><b><u>To adopt the 'In Committee' Minutes of the Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020</u></b></p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor Ruane, seconded by Alderman Bresland and resolved, that the 'In Committee' Minutes of the Housing Council held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
3.0	<p><b><u>Forward Workplan</u></b></p> <p>The Plan was noted.</p>	
4.0	<p><b><u>To adopt the Minutes of the 474<sup>th</sup> Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020</u></b></p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor Ruane, seconded by Alderman Bresland and resolved, that the Minutes of the 474<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
5.0	<p><b><u>Matters Arising from the Minutes</u></b></p>	
5.1	<p><b>Building Regulations Re Lifetime Homes Standards</b></p> <p>Members noted the response from the Department of Finance, there were no further comments.</p>	
5.2	<p><b>Invitation to the Minister for Communities - Carál Ní Chuilín to attend future Housing Council meeting</b></p> <p>It was reported that an invitation had been sent to the Minister for Communities inviting her to attend a future meeting, a reply was awaited.</p>	
6.0	<p><b><u>Housing Executive's Board Bulletin Board Meeting – Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020</u></b></p> <p>Mr Bailie reported on the Housing Executive Board's deliberations under the following headings:-</p>	
6.1	<p><b>330A-F Lisnafin Park, Strabane – Refurbishment, Assisted Living pilot and a Local Lettings Policy</b></p>	

6.2	<b>CTO83 – Electrical Testing &amp; Inspections Services 2020</b>	
6.3	<b>HR Policy Revisions</b>	
6.4	<b>Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) 2020/21</b>	
6.5	<b>Delivery Update and Approval of the Draft 3-Year SHDP 2021/22 – 2023/24 and accompanying SHDP Strategic Business Case</b>	
6.6	<b>Alternative Options to Supporting People Standardised Regional Payment Rates</b>  Other information papers noted by the Board were as follows:-	
6.7	<b>Performance Monitor at the end of October 2020</b>	
6.8	<b>Supporting People Programme Update</b>	
6.9	<b>Tower Blocks Action Plan – Proposed Private Sector Disposals</b>	
6.10	<b>Soft Market Test Exercise</b>	
6.11	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Safeguarding Report</b>	
6.12	The Board had received a presentation on <b>Supporting People Programme Scoping</b>  <b><u>Other matters arising</u></b>  Alderman Speers referred to a new Task Force set up in relation to Town Centres, and felt that Councillors should be aware of this Group and potentially feed into their discussions.  Mr Bailie stated that the Housing Executive has identified the changing nature of town centres which offers potential options for housing and he added that there may be an opportunity to purchase vacant properties and bring back into use.  In response to Councillor Cooper, Mr Bailie confirmed that the Monkscoole House and Abbotscoole tower blocks is still on the 1 to 5 year schedule with a slight slippage of a couple of weeks due to Covid-19.  Councillor Cooper undertook to provide Mr Bailie details on a particular case in relation to the length of time to repair a Smoke Alarm for a hearing impaired tenant (three days requiring a specialist	
		CX

	<p>contractor, as opposed to two hours when a smoke alarm is reported faulty as an emergency response).</p> <p>At the request by Alderman Grehan, Mr Bailie undertook to provide a breakdown of how many Affordable Warmth scheme applications that have been successful by Council area.</p> <p>Councillor Mathison referred to the Councils targets for the numbers of referrals for the Affordable Warmth scheme has been reduced, with a potential of a reduction of income to Council's for the operation of the scheme and in-turn could result the payments of staff, he asked was there a possibility of this decision being reversed.</p> <p>Mr O'Reilly explained that the referral targets were set at 44 per month to off-set against the allocated budget, realistically approximately 30 referrals per month are manageable for the Housing Executive process.</p> <p>Councillor Mathison expressed his disappointment and dissatisfaction of the scheme and the challenge for Councils with this inconsistency of targets and staff models based on these targets.</p> <p>Councillor Kelly commended the Housing Executive's response to Homelessness during COVID-19. She referred to temporary accommodation being obtain for all homeless during the lockdown with several agencies working collaboratively and hoped that in the long-term this could be the case.</p> <p>In response Mr Bailie confirmed that the current arrangements are still in place and there are a significant number of people in temporary accommodation. The Housing Executive are keen to continue to build on the success and there is a Plan, which will require additional funding. He added that in the future it is important to provide support were it is required.</p> <p>In response to Councillor Kelly's question, Mr Bailie gave an update on a recent incident regarding a shower unit which overheated and went on fire.</p> <p>Mr Bailie assured that all tenants have been issued with guidances, and the Housing Executive are visiting all properties and inspecting the properties who have these showers installed.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Bailie for his comprehensive Report.</p>	CX
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7.0	<p><b><u>Housing Issues, Department for Communities</u></b></p> <p>Mr Paul Price and Mr David Polley highlighted the changes under the specific headings on the Department for Communities (DfC) Housing Issues:-</p>	
7.1	<b>Social Newbuild starts</b>	
7.2	<b>Co-ownership</b>	
7.3	<b>Programme for Social Reform</b>	
7.4	<b>Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy</b>	
7.5	<b>Reclassification of Northern Ireland Social Housing Providers</b>	
7.6	<b>Supporting People Delivery Strategy</b>	
7.7	<b>Homelessness Strategy</b>	
7.8	<b>Regulation of the Private Rented Sector</b>	
	<p>The Department for Communities will provide a Presentation at the January Meeting.</p>	<b>DfC</b>
7.9	<b>Increasing Housing Supply</b>	
7.10	<b>Affordable Warmth Scheme</b>	
7.11	<b>NIHE Rent Increase</b>	
7.12	<b>ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 -2020</b>	
7.13	<b>Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes Framework</b>	
7.14	<b>Options to remove historical debt from the NIHE and exclude it from having to pay Corporation Tax</b>	
7.15	<b>Long term rent trajectory</b>	
7.16	<b>Affordability of social rents</b>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exempting NIHE liabilities from Corporation Tax and finding options for removal of legacy debts;</li> <li>• Get the Housing Executive building again;</li> <li>• Consultation on Housing Executive’s House Sales scheme.</li> </ul> <p>In relation to the setting and regulating of Housing Executive rents, Mr Price confirmed that the Minister for Communities has indicated that rents is an area, she wants to address across the whole social housing sector.</p> <p>Ms Brown confirmed that following the split of the Landlord side of the Housing Executive this side of the business will be accountable by the Department.</p> <p>Councillor Cooper referred to higher rents for Housing Associations properties were justified due to the quality of their homes, as Housing Executive have faced the lack of investment in their stock for many years and he felt that bringing the rents in line with Housing Associations would be unwarranted.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Ms Brown for a very informative presentation.</p>	
8.0	<p><b><u>Update on the Housing Executive’s Disability Facilities Grants (DfG)</u></b></p> <p>Members received an update by Danny O’Reilly on the Housing Executive’s Disability Facilities Grants. (Copies of the slides are appended to these minutes – Appendix B).</p> <p>Members welcomed a presentation in the future, on the impact of the changes following the review of services of the DfC systems.</p> <p>In response to Alderman Speers question, Mr O’Reilly confirmed that the Housing Executive have emergency processes in place in the event of a boiler breaking down, he added that if the tenant replaces the boiler themselves the Housing Executive cannot provide a grant retrospectively. Mr O’Reilly undertook to provide Mr Speers with a written explanation of the Housing Executive’s emergency process in relation to the boiler replacement scheme.</p> <p>Members supported Alderman Grehan suggestion that properties that have had major disabled facilities grant works invested in the property, when the occupier moves on, the property should be offered to either Housing Associations or Housing Executive to purchase those properties,</p>	<p><b>D O’Reilly</b></p> <p><b>D O’Reilly</b></p>

	<p>to retain for individual who needs adaptations, as opposed to the properties being put on the open market.</p> <p>The Department and Housing Executive Officers took on board the suggestion and recognised the benefits of the proposal.</p>	
9.0	<p><b><u>Social Housing Development Programme Housing Starts and Completions</u></b></p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
10.0	<p><b><u>Housing Executive's Scheme Starts November 2020</u></b></p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
11.0	<p><b><u>Date and Venue of Next Meeting – Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 10.30 am</u></b></p> <p>It was agreed that the monthly meetings would be held in the Boardroom, the Housing Centre, for the foreseeable future. Members would liaise with the Secretary on preference(s) to attend in person or participate remotely, depending on personal circumstances and attendance numbers.</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.



## **NIHE Landlord – The Challenge**

- NIHE owns and needs to maintain its 85,000 homes
- These homes need investment (using 2018 figures):
  - £7.1billion over 30 years
  - £3 billion over the first 11 years
- Currently NIHE can only afford c.£160million/year

## How did this happen?

- Low rents
  - Insufficient increases in rents over last 15-20 years; and
  - A HMT-imposed rent freeze (welfare reform)
- Aging stock
- Liabilities
  - Corporation Tax
  - Historic Debt
- Inability to borrow without scoring in terms of public expenditure



## The proposed solutions

- **A comprehensive rental review**
- Ensure rents are at a level affordable for social tenants and sufficient to provide a sustainable future for the Housing Executive
- **Revitalisation of the Housing Executive Landlord**
- Changing the Landlord so that it may borrow to fund investment without this scoring against public expenditure



## **Cost of ‘doing nothing’**

- Significant loss of NIHE homes over 5-10 years;
- Cycle of decline for entire NIHE;
- Acute territorial difficulties – how to make decline neutral in its impact?
- Negation of new social housing development;
- Negative curve on housing stress and housing supply



## **Minister’s Commitment**

- Revitalisation of the Housing Executive Landlord so that it may borrow to fund investment with a preference for a co-operative or mutual model,
- Ensure rents are at a level affordable for tenants and able to provide a sustainable future for the Housing Executive
- Exempting NIHE liabilities from Corporation Tax and finding options for removal of legacy debts
- Get the Housing Executive building again
- Consultation on Housing Executive’s House Sales scheme



## Benefits

- Turning the curve on "housing Stress";
- More good, sustainable social homes;
- Investment in Housing Executive homes
- Change but continuity for tenants



## How long would reform take, once agreement is reached?

- **Years 1-3 – Implementation:**
  - Rent agreement
  - Political agreement
  - Primary legislation;
  - Tenant consultation;
  - Set up new organisation
  - Secure borrowing
  - Stock and employee transfers
- **Years 4-9: £350m of investment per year**





Appendix B



## What we Do...

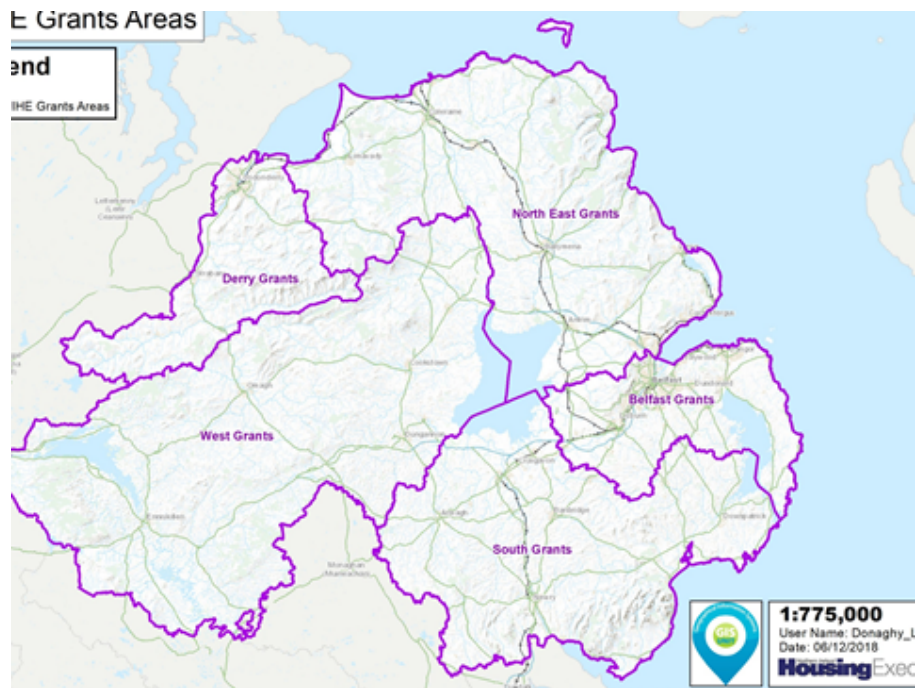
- Provide funding for adaptations to enable people to remain in their own homes
  - Critical Service
  - Helps to prevent Homelessness
  - Provides a better quality of life
- Assist people who are living in a property which poses a risk to their health and safety
- Provide financial assistance to people who are living in fuel poverty to make their home more comfortable and energy efficient

## How we Help

- Mandatory
  - Disabled Facilities Grants
  - Repair Grants
- Discretionary Grants
  - Renovation
  - Replacement
  - Home Repairs Assistance
  - Group Repair
- Energy Efficiency Schemes
  - Affordable Warmth Scheme
  - Boiler Replacement Allowance

## Delivery Model

- 5 x Grants Offices (+1 sub office)
- 4 x Management Teams
- Central PSIS Policy Department
- Approximately 155 FTE posts



## Gervase's Story...

- Gervase is 68 Years old
- Has serious health issues
- His wife is still dealing with serious illness
- Home is 140 years old

## How we helped Gervase

By offering a 'whole house' solution, to ensure all of his needs were met in relation to accessibility, safety, and thermal comfort.

Gervase received Renovation, Disabled Facilities, and Affordable Warmth Grants

## Making a Difference



## 5 -Year Spend

Expenditure	Energy Efficiency		Private sector Grants
	Affordable Warm	Boiler Replacements	PSG
Year	Actual spend	Actual spend	Actual spend
2015 / 16	£11,555,851	£3,523,600	£12,040,307
2016 / 17	£21,812,027	£2,103,500	£12,990,626
2017 / 18	£18,245,758	£1,950,250	£13,968,850
2018 / 19	£14,542,409	£1,863,118	£14,508,529
2019 / 20	£12,331,383	£1,424,536	£15,611,329
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£78,487,428</b>	<b>£10,865,004</b>	<b>£69,119,641</b>

## Challenges Driving Review

- Time taken to process DFG's
- Replacing our IT System with a more flexible bespoke system
- Complying with new Regulations
- Ongoing pressure on Revenue budget

## Service Delivery

A number of changes have been implemented following the review of services completed in 2018

- Policy
- Processes and procedures
- New IT system
- Roles and Responsibilities reviewed

## Policy & Procedures

### Test of Resources

A Test of resources is completed to assess the contribution which will be made by the Grants applicant towards the cost of the works

Changes: - Now completed at beginning of application process.  
Use of Renovator software not imbedded in system to allow flexibility

Impact: -

- Customer makes informed decision to proceed or cancel application before making any major financial commitment.
- NIHE focuses resources on viable cases.
- More accurate financial forecasting possible.



## Verification of Benefits

Verification of entitlement to particular benefits are required in relation to assessing the need for a Test of Resources.

**Changes:** - Data Sharing Agreement established with Pensions and Benefits Agency to provide formal notification of Benefits in payment - directly to Grants office staff.

**Impact:** -

- Significantly reduced response times
- Ensures accuracy of information.
- Simplifies process for customer.
- Partnership working with other agencies enhanced.

## Verification of ownership

Verification of ownership of the dwelling is a legal requirement for the grant application to proceed

**Changes:** Policy regarding verification amended to include alternative acceptable documentation for DFG's.

**Impact:** -

- Reduced time taken for submission of documentation ensures applications are processed more quickly.
- Simplified option assists customer with completion of documentation.

## Revised Application forms

Applicants must submit formal application forms to apply for grant aid

Changes: Clear and concise form of language used throughout documentation with one form for all.

Impact: -

- Ease of understanding for customer
- Fewer forms to complete
- Efficiency of printing creates savings.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Technical Officer

Changes: Technical Officer to progress case from start to finish without need to transfer to another Tech. Officer mid – process.

Impact: -

- Increase in Customer confidence due to Tech. Officers knowledge of case and having a consistent link throughout process.
- More consistent approach to liaison with other agencies.
- Improve processing times due to decreased hand-offs.
- Increased job satisfaction in managing a job from start to finish.



## Case Officer

All approvals and completions are currently signed of by a Senior Officer

**Changes:** Level of requirement for authorisation by Senior Officer to be reduced to a percentage check, following analysis of previous data.

**Impact:** -

- Improvement to processing times through fewer 'hand offs'
- Improved job satisfaction
- Improvement in ability to manage case and move it through process.

## IT System

July 2019- Implementation of a new bespoke IT system developed 'in-house' specifically for Grants.

**Changes:** System has more flexibility to provide staff with the ability to move cases forward as required without unnecessary steps.

**Impact:** -

- Ability to add enhancement where required
- Ability to amend where/if required
- System built to our specification
- Retention of knowledge
- Adaptable to provide focused reporting opportunities

## Customer Satisfaction Survey 2020

- Monitor impact of our service and impact of improvements
- Previous survey 2017- overall satisfaction with service 92%
- 2020 Survey underway – target 95%
- Specific area of questioning around difference works have made to day-to-day living; service provision and where/if difficulties arose; timeliness of service
- Areas identified for improvement present opportunities for continued development

## Current Challenges

- Covid-19 Restrictions
  - Enabling Staff to work Remotely
  - Emergency procedures during lockdown
  - Ongoing cautious approach
- Implementing new Case Officer role
- Recruitment of Technical Staff
- Identifying further improvements



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## **JANUARY HOUSING COUNCIL BULLETIN**

The Northern Ireland Housing Council met on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 10.30 am via Conference Call.

For Information, a report of the attendance is undernoted:-

### **Present by Video Conferencing**

Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough (Chair)
Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District
Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City

### **Members Apologies**

Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Vice Chair)
John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough Council

Discussions on the undernoted matters took place as follows:-

Members then received an update from Paul Price and David Polley Department for Communities, on the **Departments' Housing Top Issues** to date, which included:-

- Social Newbuild starts
- Co-ownership
- Programme for Social Reform
- Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy
- Reclassification of Northern Ireland Social Housing Providers
- Supporting People Delivery Strategy
- Homelessness Strategy
- Regulation of the Private Rented Sector
- Increasing Housing Supply
- Affordable Warmth Scheme
- NIHE Rent Increase
- ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 -2020
- Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes Framework

- Options to remove historical debt from the NIHE and exclude it from having to pay Corporation Tax
- Long term rent trajectory
- Affordability of social rents

Members received the following presentations:-

1. Professor Peter Roberts, Chair of the Housing Executive gave a presentation on the Next 50 Years: Working Together to create the future of Northern Ireland Social Housing;
2. Eilish O'Neill from the Department for Communities gave a presentation on the Review of Role and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector.

Once the minutes of the meeting are ratified at the February Meeting, they can be accessed on the Housing Council website: [www.nihousingcouncil.org](http://www.nihousingcouncil.org)

The next Housing Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> February at 10.30 am in the Boardroom, the Housing Centre, Belfast or via conference call.

Should you require any further information or have any questions regarding the content.

### **Contacts**

**Chair**, Alderman Tommy Nicholl MBE

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**Secretary**, Kelly Cameron

The Housing Centre,

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Belfast

BT2 8PB

[Kelly.cameron@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:Kelly.cameron@nihe.gov.uk) Tel: 028 95982752



Our Ref: Democratic Services

Date: 4 December 2020

Email: [democratic.services@fermanaghomagh.com](mailto:democratic.services@fermanaghomagh.com)

Mr David Jackson  
Chief Executive  
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council  
**By email: [David.jackson@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:David.jackson@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)**

Dear David

**Re: Motion – Coronavirus Pandemic Impact on GCSE and A Level Students**

At the Council meeting held on 1 December 2020, the Council approved the following Motion:

**“Due to the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council recognises the unprecedented stress that has been placed on this year’s GCSE and A Level students.**

**This Council;**

- **Notes that Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on some schools and pupils over others**
- **Also acknowledges that those students that have had to study from home, within this district area, are faced with one of the worst broadband infrastructures on this island and therefore are left at a serious disadvantage to other students**
- **Recognises that it is impossible to have a level playing field for exams to take place.**

**As such this Council shall write to the Minister of Education Peter Weir, the Executive office and all the Political Party leaders with in the Northern Assembly to ask that we follow the Welsh model of Assessment based on work throughout the year which can take into account whether a pupil has missed substantial periods of time due to self-isolation and removes entirely the risk of exams being cancelled at the last minute as they were this year.**

**This Council will further write to the other 10 Councils asking them for support in this motion.**

**That the Council asks the Education Authority to give a briefing at the Informal Meeting on 25 January 2020 specifically on counselling for young people in our schools at this time and in youth settings and to establish if there is any data or information beginning to emerge to show the burden on young people’s mental health and their overall sense of wellbeing from the imposition of exams during a pandemic.”**

As outlined above, the Council would ask for your Council’s support of the Motion.

The Council looks forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison McCullagh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue ink color.

**Alison McCullagh**  
**Chief Executive**

**Marie Ward**  
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair  
**an Iúir, Mhúrn  
agus an Dúin**  
**Newry, Mourne  
and Down**  
District Council

Our ref: C/016/2021

7 January 2021

Mr David Jackson  
CEO  
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council  
Council HQ  
Cloonanvin  
66 Portstewart Road  
Coleraine BT52 1EY

**By email:** [david.jackson@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:david.jackson@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

Dear Mr Jackson

**Re: Contribution to Health and Social Care Workers**

At a Meeting of Newry Mourne & Down District Council held on Monday 4 January 2021, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

**“That this Council recognises the importance of our National Health Service and the heroic contribution of our health and social care workers, and care home workers, throughout the pandemic; express our thanks for their commitment to the care for community and will write to the Executive asking them to administer a “thank you” payment of at least £500 as a practical demonstration of our gratitude.**

**The Council also calls for nursing registration and social care fees for 2021 to be waived in line with the sentiments expressed in this Motion and for this Council to write to and circulate this Motion to the other 10 Local Authorities seeking their support and writing also to the Executive calling for fee waivers to be implemented for this year”.**

I enclose for your information, copy letter dated 8 January 2021 which was sent to the Executive on this matter. Newry Mourne and Down District Council would ask for your support in calling on the Executive to find the necessary funding to ensure this payment can be made and the nursing and social care registration fees waived for 2021.

Yours sincerely

**Marie Ward**  
**Chief Executive**

/CMcA

**Oifig an Iúir**  
**Newry Office**  
O'Hagan House  
Monaghan Row  
Newry BT35 8DJ

**Oifig Dhún Pádraig**  
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0330 137 4000 (Council)  
council@nmandd.org  
www.newrymournedown.org

**Ag freastal ar an Dún**  
**agus Ard Mhacha Theas**  
**Serving Down**  
**and South Armagh**



Marie Ward  
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair  
**an Iúir, Mhúrn  
agus an Dúin**  
**Newry, Mourne  
and Down**  
District Council

Our ref: C/016/2021

7 January 2021

Northern Ireland Executive Office  
SD03 Stormont Castle  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast  
BT4 3TT  
**By email:** [info@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:info@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)

Dear Minister

### **Re: Contribution to Health and Social Care Workers**

At a Meeting of Newry Mourne & Down District Council held on Monday 4 January 2021, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

**“That this Council recognises the importance of our National Health Service and the heroic contribution of our health and social care workers, and care home workers, throughout the pandemic; express our thanks for their commitment to the care for community and will write to the Executive asking them to administer a “thank you” payment of at least £500 as a practical demonstration of our gratitude.**

**The Council also calls for nursing registration and social care fees for 2021 to be waived in line with the sentiments expressed in this Motion and for this Council to write to and circulate this Motion to the other 10 Local Authorities seeking their support and writing also to the Executive calling for fee waivers to be implemented for this year”.**

In unanimously agreeing the Motion, Members praised all the health and social care staff who had really stepped up to the mark since the beginning of the pandemic, and whose sense of duty, compassion and professionalism, whilst under so much pressure, had enabled the delivery of a health service that is second to none.

The Council is conscious that whilst the Minister for Health has already indicated he wished to make an additional payment for this year to Health and Social Care workers, any decision will ultimately require approval from the collective Executive, including the Minister of Finance. The Council is therefore asking that the Executive consider favourably the request to administer this “thank you” payment and also to consider waiving registration fees for 2021 for nursing and social care.

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agus Ard Mhacha Theas  
Serving Down  
and South Armagh**





The Council looks forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marie Ward', is written over a faint, light-colored rectangular background.

**Marie Ward**  
**Chief Executive**

/CMcA



Northern Ireland

# Local Government Commissioner for Standards

15 January 2021

Sent by email to:

[Jacqui.dixon@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk](mailto:Jacqui.dixon@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk)  
[anne.donaghy@midandeastantrim.gov.uk](mailto:anne.donaghy@midandeastantrim.gov.uk)  
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Dear Council Chief Executive

## **ACCESSING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS (LGES) DIRECTORATE**

I hope you, your staff and your elected members continue to keep safe and well during these unprecedented times. As we have commenced a further period of lockdown, giving rise to the continued need to work remotely and communicate electronically, I thought it would be helpful to write to you about some of the issues the Local Government and Ethical Standards (LGES) Directorate has experienced in progressing our assessment and investigation of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

By way of background, the legislation under which we operate requires that our investigations must be conducted in private. As such any electronic communication issued by the LGES Directorate which contains sensitive or detailed information is sent via Egress for information security purposes. Further information on how to access Egress email correspondence issued by this office is available on our website at [Egress-User-Information-Quickstart-Guide-E.pdf \(nipso.org.uk\)](#) This Egress User guide explains how to register to open the secure email containing the letter. Egress is free for the recipient of the email to use.

On a number of occasions Councillors have not accessed the emails that have been sent to them by LGES. This has been either because:

- (a) the email was quarantined by the Council's email server
- (b) the Councillor failed to routinely check their email inbox and associated junk and spam folders.

To that end I would ask that the relevant IT staff within the council, with responsibility for releasing quarantined emails, are informed of our Directorate's use of the Egress platform when sending emails from [@nipso.org.uk](mailto:@nipso.org.uk), so that these can be released to the individual recipient in a timely way.

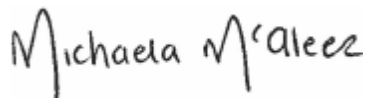
Furthermore, whilst I am aware that many of you routinely remind Councillors of the need to check their email inbox including their junk and spam folders, I would ask that Councillors are advised of the issues that we have on occasion experienced, as outlined above, and the need for heightened housekeeping of their official email account (i.e. that listed on their Councillor profile page) so that important communications are not missed or overlooked.

In addition, if Councillors could ensure that the contact details on their councillor profile pages are up to date and the relevant phone number(s) and email address are provided, that would be most helpful.

I have copied the secretary of the National Association of Councillors (NAC) into this correspondence as NAC has agreed to use its established communication network with Councillors as a means to further reinforce and emphasise the information outlined above.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



**MICHAELA MCALEER**  
**Acting Deputy Commissioner**

**cc Councillor Joe Boyle- Secretary NAC**

## **PARTNERSHIP PANEL MEETING – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

### **OUTCOMES NOTE**

The Northern Ireland Partnership Panel met for its first (virtual) meeting of 2021 on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021. **This Outcomes Note** is a draft provided by NILGA, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association.

*A fuller version of Outcomes and Actions will follow in Draft Minutes.*

**The following Ministers were in attendance on 20<sup>th</sup> January:**

**Minister Deirdre Hargey (Chair), Department for Communities; Minister Conor Murphy, Department of Finance; Minister Nichola Mallon, Department for Infrastructure  
Minister Naomi Long, Department of Justice, Minister Peter Weir, Department for Education.**

*With apologies received from Minister Edwin Poots, Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; Minister Robin Swann; Dr Michael McBride, Department of Health*

**The following Local Government Partnership Panel Members were present:**

**Cllr Matt Garrett, NILGA President / Belfast City Council; Cllr Robert Adair, Ards and North Down Borough Council (apology for lateness); Cllr Paul Greenfield, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Cllr Geraldine McAteer, Belfast City Council; Alderman Thomas McKeown, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council; Cllr Ruairi McHugh, Derry City and Strabane District Council; Cllr Tommy Maguire, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; Cllr John Palmer, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Ald Billy Ashe MBE, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; Cllr Kerri Hughes, Mid Ulster District Council; Cllr Robert Burgess, Newry Mourne and Down District Council / NILGA Office Bearer; Cllr Frances Burton, NILGA Office Bearer / Mid Ulster District Council; Cllr Martin Kearney, NILGA Office Bearer / Mid Ulster District Council; Alan McDowell, NILGA Office Bearer / Ards and North Down Borough Council.**

*With an apology received from Ald Mark Cosgrove, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council;*

**Central government officers in attendance:** Tracy Meharg, Permanent Secretary, DfC; Sue Gray, Permanent Secretary, DoF; Anthony Carleton, DfC; Sorcha Hassey, (PP Secretariat) DfC; Ian Hanash, (PP Secretariat), DfC; Piers Dalgarno, (PP Secretariat), DfC; Janine McCauley; Conor Charles; Michael McEvoy; Eoin Rooney; Adele Watters; Claire Johnson;

**Local government officers in attendance:** Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council / SOLACE Chair; Stephen Reid, Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council / SOLACE Vice Chair; Derek McCallan, NILGA Chief Executive (PP Secretariat); Roger Wilson, Chief Executive, Armagh Banbridge and

Craigavon Borough Council; Alison McCullagh, Chief Executive, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; Adrian McCreesh, Chief Executive, Mid Ulster District Council; David Burns, Chief Executive, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; John Tully, Belfast City Council; Louise Kennedy, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; Karen Smyth, NILGA; Lisa O’Kane, NILGA, Amy McGrath, NILGA; Antoinette Kennedy, (PP Secretariat), NILGA.

## **1. Introductions**

The Chair Minister Deirdre Hargey welcomed everyone to the Partnership Panel Meeting adding that she was glad to see the Partnership Panel up and running again; The Partnership Panel brings together central and local government through Ministers and Councillors with supporting officials. She stressed in her opening comments that she would like to see engagement across the board, with representatives from Departments and Councils contributing throughout Panel meetings.

The Minister advised that she received a request from Cllr Joe Boyle Secretary of the National Association of Councillors (NAC) requesting that the NAC have a representative sit in an observer capacity at future Partnership Panel Meetings. In response to this request the Minister proposed that NAC be invited to attend future Partnership Panel meetings, the proposal was seconded by Cllr Matt Garrett, NILGA President.

### **Agreed: NAC Representative to be invited via NILGA to attend future Partnership Panel Meetings in an observer capacity.**

The Minister handed over to the NILGA President to provide his opening comments. In his opening address Cllr Garrett referred to the severe impact COVID is having on people in our communities. He added that our communities need both local and central government and that shared approaches and solutions are key. He also emphasised that local government’s potential is far from reached, however, to achieve this, a new model and resources are required.

## **2. Note of Previous Meeting, 16 September 2020**

The note of the last meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September was proposed by Cllr Kerri Hughes and seconded by Ald Thomas McKeown.

## **3. Principles of Partnership and Engagement**

Paper PP01 “Principles of Partnership and Engagement” was raised by Cllr Robert Burgess under *matters arising*. Cllr Burgess stated that there is a vital need for both parts of government to work together and proposed that there is approval for the *Principles of Partnership and Engagement* paper which can be developed in line with Section 3.1 of the Partnership Panel workplan; “*Strengthening relations between and within the two tiers of government in Northern Ireland*”.

Cllr Paul Greenfield commented that in line with the principles referred to by Cllr Burgess, there is a need for timely information and that for future partnership panel meetings; it would be helpful if the agenda and papers are provided to panel members at least 4 -5 working days in advance of meetings.

Minister Naomi Long commented that the paper sets a solid foundation to be built upon, however it should be reframed slightly to highlight what both central and local government need to do for effective partnership and engagement. Members in attendance agreed.

**Action: Principles of Partnership and Engagement agreed subject to adjustment per above.**

#### **4. Update on actions from Partnership Panel Meeting; 16.09.2020**

The Minister provided an overview of the actions raised at the last meeting. In response to action point at para 5.4 of the minutes, a composite report detailing Executive Departments response for social and economic recovery from COVID 19 has been circulated to local government partnership members.

Cllr John Palmer provided an update on the community planning update as per para 9.4 of the minutes. A clear message which is coming through is that more work is being done to alleviate poverty. Anti-poverty measures in the Assembly and in Councils are beginning to be joined up; this is crucial and NILGA wishes also to engage with the Minister's community planning and anti-poverty units to accelerate the impact on the ground. A formal piece will be completed when the data is brought together.

**Action: An update report on actions in progress will be brought to next scheduled Partnership Panel meeting in April 2021.**

#### **5. Strategy 2020 Project: Developing a new Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity**

Minister Hargey advised that moving forward, an item will be set on the agenda for departments to update members on upcoming strategies and policies being brought forward by the Assembly.

The Strategy 2020 Project for sport and physical activity; a 10-year strategy is currently being developed by DfC and this will replace the Sports Matters strategy which was endorsed by the Executive in 2009. There has been considerable involvement and contribution from a wide range of stakeholders including local councils and local communities and section 75 groups in the development of this strategy. The success of this strategy will be heavily reliant on the co-delivery of strategic outcomes that will require collaborative approach involving sports organisations, government bodies, departments, councils and local communities. The new strategy provides an opportunity to highlight the roles of sport and physical activity and how they contribute to the long-term health and wellbeing of the population.

A formal eight-week consultation on the new strategy will commence early this year and the Minister encourages as many individuals and organisations as possible to respond to the consultation to help shape this future strategy.

In response to the draft strategy an update was provided on behalf of Cllr Robert Adair. Local government welcomes the new strategy and Councils wish to play their full part. Sport is both a statutory and wellbeing function for our Councils including the provision of sporting facilities, competitive sports but also preventative health, which is an especially important issue and where an education role has to come into play too. Councils also welcome the co-design approach with local government, communities and sporting organisations as referred to by the Minister.

#### **6. Critical sustainability and regional issues; Local Government Finances Task and Finish Group Progress (verbal update)**

The Minister handed over to Cllr Matt Garrett and Ald Alan McDowell to provide a verbal update on the inaugural meeting of the Local Government Finances Task and Finish Group which took place on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Cllr Matt Garrett thanked the Chair, for convening the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January. An outcome note is being agreed with the Secretariat and will follow in due course.

**Action: Outcome Note from inaugural Local Government Finances Task and Finish Group Meeting 12.01.2021 to be circulated to Members**

The next seven weeks are critical to local government's sustainability, with rates striking set for the beginning of March.

NILGA and council officers are doing all that is possible to present accurate information so that rates can be struck across the 11 councils. Local government has sought any reassurances that government can provide in the coming days and weeks and welcome the specific dialogue with the Finance Minister and his Department at this time.

Moving forward and as discussed at the Task and Finish Group on 12<sup>th</sup> January, there is an opportunity for joint central – local evidence-based lobbying of the Treasury throughout this year and next year.

Ald Alan McDowell added that as councils approach the new rates year, we are presented with a significant challenge; forecasted income and our funding model does not allow Councils to do all the things that are expected of us by citizens and by wider government.

It is clear that tough choices – as with government departments themselves - will have to be made. The rate councils strike must be balanced to ensure all public services are met and must comply with legal requirements of audit. If councils receive funding commitments and other fiscal flexibilities to offset forecast losses, councils will be able to strike rates to ensure quality public services at affordable costs. However, the rates model is unsustainable and requires major changes and will be explored further by the Partnership Panel's *Local Government Finances Task and Finish Group*.

Through the Chair, Minister Conor Murphy provided an update on this critical issue in response to members' comments. There has been a lot of useful dialogue and continuing dialogue with Councils. There has been a joint up approach across all levels of government. The rates holiday provided when the pandemic hit has protected both businesses and Council rate income.

The Department of Finance wishes to continue the rates holiday for 6 months, as a minimum, and the Minister urges Councils to consider this when they are striking their own district rates. The Department will be freezing the domestic and non-domestic regional rates.

Minister Murphy commented on the difficult "stand still" draft budget for the next financial year. The amount of money to be received by the Executive was set by the Treasury's Spending Review late last year. The Executive are currently looking at capital options and want to roll outstanding COVID-19 monies into the next financial year. Discussions are ongoing with the Treasury.

Minister Murphy also commented on the vital role of Councils and the importance of the continuing dialogue with NILGA, SOLACE and the Communities Minister.

In response, Minister Harghey commented on the difficult year past; the impact on Councils and the work undertaken to date on projected losses; and the working out of further funding allocations to Councils.



**Action: Ongoing partnership work to continue; Local Government finances and sustainability will be raised as an agenda item again at the April 2021 meeting of the Partnership Panel**

The draft budget is currently out for consultation, and the consultation will run until 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Through the Chair, Jacqui Dixon, SOLACE Chair, welcomed financial assistance which has been provided to Councils and the continuing dialogue with Departments; the engagement and relationships between Departments and Councils has never been better. An extension to the rates holiday would aid Councils in the rate striking decisions they are about to take. Councils are committed to striking the lowest possible rate.

## **7. Shared Prosperity Fund**

Minister Hargey invited Cllr Martin Kearney to provide an overview of paper PP02, “UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Central / Local government co-design”.

In his address to the Partnership Panel, Cllr Kearney commented that “co-design” has been the recurring theme of this meeting. The Shared Prosperity Fund is a matter for every department and council as it is a multibillion, multi annual fund, in theory to replace EU funding, which members of the Panel will be aware amounted to over £3.5 billion over the past ten years in Northern Ireland.

NILGA through a UK local government funding alert and through Council chiefs, have published and shared a report with all of wider government, and will be providing evidence to Stormont Committees. NILGA and SOLACE will pursue this diligently with colleagues in the lead NI department – Finance – on the basis that:

- Northern Ireland must set its own criteria
- the funding sought must match what we got before

Cllr Kearney added that developing social cohesion, local economic development and infrastructure locally through local government will provide a greater yield than the present, disconnected, national approach.

In conclusion, Cllr. Kearney put forward a *recommendation to the Panel Chair for a Northern Ireland Central - Local SPF Group to be set up to ensure local input into the design, delivery and measurement of this fund.* (This would be keeping with activity in Scotland and Wales and would likely be a matter to be led by the Department of Finance.)

Through the Chair, Cllr Kearney also suggested that *work continues apace on this and for joint central – local efforts be reported to the Partnership Panel at its next meeting in April 2021, if the Chair and Panel Members agree.*

The Chair thanked Cllr Kearney for his update and called in Minister Murphy for a response.

Minister Murphy concurred with Cllr Kearney’s comments on a co-design approach for the Shared Prosperity Fund. The Minister recently launched a broader paper to the Executive in relation to Peace Plus, and through discussion with Dublin government and Westminster have managed to get that money up to one billion Euros over a 5–6-year period, hence it is a



significant fund. It will be going out for consultation and the Minister encourages all Councils and stakeholders to engage with the SEUPB in its design.

In relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund, there is a less encouraging message. The approach in the Executive, a viewpoint shared by all Ministers is for replacement EU funding to be given directly to the Executive so that Northern Ireland specific programmes aligned to the Executive's priorities can be designed. Such programmes would be taken forward in consultation with all stakeholders including Councils and funding allocated according to the Executive's priorities. However, the government in Westminster are taking a different approach; - The Internal Market Bill which has been brought through Westminster indicates that EU replacement funding will be held centrally in Whitehall and distributed by Whitehall in accordance with priorities set out by the British government itself.

The Minister further advised that the Chief Secretary of the Treasury has also indicated that the intention is to hold the fund centrally at Whitehall. If Northern Ireland is going to have to compete in terms of applications into Whitehall; Northern Ireland is going to suffer a reduction in the replacement of EU funding which is going to have a very significant impact on some of the programmes which are going to be provided across Departments; ability to access the money is going to be difficult; it is not a very promising outlook.

The Department and the Executive in partnership with our counterparts in Wales and Scotland are going to continue to challenge the government in London in regard to its approach.

The Chair thanked the Finance Minister for his response. The dialogue and lobbying of Westminster and Whitehall will continue on this issue and an update provided at the next Partnership Panel meeting in April.

**Action: The Finance Minister will provide a further update on the Shared Prosperity Fund at Partnership Panel meeting scheduled for April 2021.**

## **8. Impact of the UK Environment Bill on NI Councils**

Minister Hargey invited Cllr Geraldine McAteer to update the Panel on the impact of the UK Environment Bill on NI Councils. Cllr McAteer referred Members to Paper PP03 and provided an overview of the Paper. Since Brexit, the European Commission and Court of Justice of the European Union no longer has an oversight role which includes the environment. The legislation being put in place by the UK government to maintain the operability of existing environmental legislation here after withdrawal, does not cover the environmental principles and governance aspects of EU arrangements. Instead, these were included in a UK wide Environment Bill, as were environmental improvement plans.

This Bill is currently in passage through Westminster, and although the environment is largely a devolved matter; in addition to environmental principles, governance and plans; the Bill covers a wide range of provisions, including clauses related to resources and waste management, chemicals, air quality, sustainable water resources and measures for restoring and enhancing nature and green spaces.

Cllr McAteer highlighted that the Bill is one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation and consultation any government and its citizens will face, and local government are pleased that this matter is on the Panel's agenda.

Through the Chair, Cllr McAteer suggested that in the first instance, the Panel supports the recommendation that councils and NILGA work with DAERA about timing and resourcing of change, expectations placed on councils, and collaborative working on key cross-cutting

issues such as climate action and the circular economy. She added that local government are keen to see an effective environmental governance mechanism in operation and would welcome further action on environmental improvement plans and independent regulation.

The Minister thanked Cllr McAteer for her update and advised that Minister Poots had convened a meeting with the Executive Departments on Green Growth. As an action point, Minister Hargey recommended that a specific meeting on the UK Environment Bill and its impact on Councils be convened.

**Action: A specific meeting on the UK Environment Bill and its impact on Councils will be convened.**

## **9. Waste management**

Minister Hargey invited Ald Billy Ashe MBE to provide an overview of the Waste Management issues as presented in Paper PP04.

Ald Billy Ashe in his address to the Panel reinforced some of the issues raised in paper PP04. In his opening remarks he also welcomed the recent funding provided by the DAERA Minister.

He highlighted that the waste management issue has been brought to the Panel as an all-government Policy & Resource issue. New targets will require 65% of our waste to be recycled by 2035.

There are wider issues with waste management and there is a need for joined up working between Councils and the Departments. One of the main issues to be addressed is landfill capacity which will be at max. by 2028; including a decision on the incinerator at Hightown.

Alderman Ashe also referred to the waste management matters which are best resolved in a joined-up way including Waste Management delivery, the circular economy and carbon emissions (including discussion on how we can contribute to the UK's net zero target for 2050.)

In concluding his update Alderman Ashe suggested that an update on our joint efforts be reported to the Panel at its next meeting, if the Chair and members are content with that approach?

The Minister thanked Alderman Ashe for his update, adding that some of the issues outlined in PP04 have also been referred to by the DAERA Minister himself in a meeting he convened with Minister colleagues recently; including the emissions targets 2050 and the work which needs to be done. The matters raised also relate to the Executive's overarching multi-decade "Green Growth" Strategy, so in agreeing with Alderman Ashe, these issues will be picked up across the Departments and with Councils, and an update brought back to the next Partnership Panel meeting.

**Action: An update to be provided at next Partnership Panel meeting.**

## **10. Proposed issues (as raised in Action Report) to be explored and developed via Partnership Panel Workplan**

Minister Hargey called upon Cllr Tommy Maguire to provide an update as per Paper PP05.

In his address to the Panel, Cllr Maguire asked the Chair and Members to note the items and recommendations associated with PP05, mindful that colleague Councils have joined with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in seeking resolution to common and significant issues, from summer hunger to water infrastructure, and the policy gap affecting urban settlements of less than 5000 population; which seriously impacts our rural councils.

Cllr Maguire added that he looks forward to joint working between local and central government to find solutions to these pressing issues.

He concluded by conveying his appreciation for the opportunity to raise and put on record Councils' concerns and looks forward to departmental and council engagement to pursue resolutions for the people we jointly serve.

## 11. Any Other Business

It was noted through the Chair that due to urgent, last minute business; Dr Michael McBride was unable to provide an update to the Panel. Through the Chair, Cllr Frances Burton, on behalf of local government, thanked the Minister for Health and the Chief Medical Officer; she also put forward that the Partnership Panel itself, through the Communities Minister, formally recognises both those in leadership and also all front-line staff, from refuse collectors to nurses, who have saved so many lives.

Cllr Frances Burton thanked Ministers and their departments for the Composite Report provided to local government panel members on Executive Departments actions for social and economic recovery from Covid 19, highlighting that councils have, equally, played their part.

## 12. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Partnership Panel will take place on 21 April 2021.

**Footnote: In line with GDPR, permissions were sought and obtained for a screenshot of the Partnership Panel meeting for the DfC's Twitter account.**

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