

Title of Report:	Correspondence
Committee Report Submitted To:	Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	1 June 2021
For Decision or For Information	FOR DECISION

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

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

Screening Requirements	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 Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

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 12th May 2021

The Minutes of The 479th Northern Ireland Housing Council meeting held on 15 April 2021 and April Bulletin are attached for information.

2.2 Northern Ireland Local Government Association correspondence

The Partnership Panel Outcome Notes for meeting held on 21st April 2021 are attached for information.

2.3 Department for the Economy correspondence dated 30 April 2021

Acknowledgement received in response to letter to Minister from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council regarding council resolution recognising the financial difficulties students are experiencing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Correspondence attached.

2.4 Fermanagh and Omagh District Council correspondence dated 7th May 2021

Correspondence received requesting support for Motion 'Protection of Native Honeybees'

Correspondence attached.

2.5 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council correspondence dated 7th May 2021

Correspondence received requesting support for Motion 'Dental Services during Covid-19 Pandemic'

Correspondence attached.

2.6 The Executive Office Correspondence dated 20th May 2021

Correspondence confirming receipt of correspondence sent from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council regarding Carlow County Council Notice of Motion on Mother and Baby Homes.

Available on request.

2.7 Ards and North Down Borough Council correspondence dated 24th May 2021

Correspondence received requesting response to Resolution 'That this Council deplores the refusal of the Stormont authorities to permit a stone sculpture to mark the Northern Ireland centenary to be placed at the seat of government...'

Correspondence attached

2.8 Northern Ireland Local Government Association request for Corporate Response

Consultation regarding 'A framework to the 2023 Election' requesting a corporate response by Council ideally by Friday, 9th July 2021, with high level consideration of:

- (i) The suitability or otherwise of the Vision Statement
- (ii) The suitability or otherwise of the 5 main themes identified
- (iii) The suitability or otherwise of each of the 11 actions listed
- (iv) Comment by the Council in regard to its own ideas and suggested actions on how the local government sector can be strengthened in a post pandemic environment in the run up to the Local Council elections scheduled for May 2023.

Please send Council's submission to s.little@nilga.org for the attention of NILGA's Chief Executive. Thank you for your comments and your committed partnership within the local government sector.

Consultation papers attached

3.0 It is recommended that Council consider the correspondence.



Minutes of the (Annual General Meeting) 479th Meeting
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on
Thursday 15th April 2021 at 10.30 am via Webex

Present by Video Conferencing:

Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough
Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Allan Bresland	Derry City & Strabane District
Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

In Attendance:

Grainia Long	Chief Executive (Housing Executive)
Amanda Stewart	Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Blair Anderson	Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Saira Khan	Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Kelly Cameron	Secretary (Housing Executive Secretariat)
Kim Smyth	Secretariat Manager

Apologies:

There were no apologies.

1.0	<p><u>Election of Chair & Vice Chair</u></p> <p>The first item of business transacted at the Annual General Meeting of the Council was the election of Chair and Vice Chair under Standing Order 10(2), Page 19.</p> <p>NOTED: that (1) no Member shall preside during an election in which he/she is a candidate (Standing Order 3(4), Page 7); and (2) in the case of an equality of votes the person presiding (if he/she is a Member) shall have a second or casting vote – STANDING ORDER 17(2).</p>	
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<p>1.1</p>	<p>As the position of Chair is currently vacant the Secretary presided over the election of Chair.</p> <p>Alderman Tommy Nicholl was proposed by Alderman J Finlay and seconded by Alderman A Bresland.</p> <p>Councillor Anne-Marie Fitzgerald was proposed by Councillor Catherine Elattar and Councillor Michael Ruane.</p> <p>Following a show of hands:-</p> <p>Alderman Nicholl received 5 votes and Councillor Anne-Marie Fitzgerald received 6 votes.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Councillor Anne-Marie Fitzgerald was duly elected as Chair for the ensuing two years.</p> <p>Councillor Anne-Marie Fitzgerald accepted the post of Chair.</p> <p>The Chair paid tribute to the ongoing Chair, Alderman Tommy Nicholl during his term of office for his leadership and thanked him for his work and dedication.</p>	
<p>1.2</p>	<p><u>Election of Vice Chair</u></p> <p>The Secretary also presided over the election of Vice Chair.</p> <p>Councillor Mark Cooper was proposed by Alderman Jim Speers and seconded by Councillor Nick Mathison.</p> <p>There were no other nominations for Vice Chair.</p> <p>RESOLVED: unanimously, that Councillor Mark Cooper was duly elected as Vice Chair for the ensuing two years.</p> <p>Councillor Mark Cooper accepted the post of Vice Chair.</p>	
<p>2.0</p>	<p><u>Housing Council Committees</u></p> <p>Members constituted the following Committees to carry out the work of the Housing Council and appointed Members.</p> <p>NOTED: the Chair and Vice Chair retain Membership of all Committees.</p>	

<p>2.1</p>	<p>Standing Orders Committee</p> <p>Members noted that the Housing Council is to undertake a Review of Standing Orders in the near future.</p> <p>The Committee Members were agreed as follows:</p> <p>Councillor Nick Mathison Alderman Jim Speers Alderman John Finlay</p>	
<p>2.2</p>	<p>Policy Committee</p> <p>The Committee considers all policy/governance matters referred to it by the Housing Council. The Policy Committee meets as and when required.</p> <p>Agreed: When a Policy Committee Meeting is required to be set up, Committee Members would be appointed, at this stage.</p>	
<p>2.3</p>	<p>Awards Committee</p> <p>This Committee will determines the winners of awards presented annually by the Housing Council.</p> <p>The Awards are:- The Norman Capper Memorial Trophy, the J R Gorman Trophy, the J Bailie Trophy and the Jim Speers Special Award.</p> <p>The Committee Members were agreed as follows:</p> <p>Councillor Michelle Kelly Councillor Michael Ruane Alderman Allan Bresland</p> <p>RESOLVED: Members present unanimously endorsed the above nominations.</p>	
<p>3.0</p>	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Members Attendance 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021</p> <p>Members noted that each Council has been notified of their Members attendance.</p>	

<p>5.0</p>	<p><u>Forward Workplan</u></p> <p>The plan was noted.</p>	
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Meeting with the Minister for Communities, Minister Hargey MLA</p> <p>Members noted that a Meeting had been arranged for the Minister for Communities for Wednesday, 5th May 2021 at 4 pm.</p> <p>It was reported that the Meeting will focus on the Ministerial announcement in November 2020 on the future of social housing in Northern Ireland, and to provide the Minister with an opportunity to provide an update on progress, as one of the co-design stakeholders.</p> <p>Following discussion it was agreed that the following items should be included on the Agenda, time permitting:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness • Review of Allocations Scheme • Monitoring and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector <p>AGREED:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Secretary will compile an agenda to be sent to the Private Office • Members to submit a list of questions to the Secretary to be passed to the Private Office, prior to the Meeting 	<p>Secretary All Members</p>
<p>7.0</p>	<p><u>Housing Council 50th Anniversary</u></p> <p>(i) Noted - NI Housing Council Logo.</p> <p>(ii) Noted - 50th Anniversary Press Release.</p> <p>(iii) Reimaging of the Website – it was noted that the Secretary will progress updates to the content over the next few weeks.</p> <p>Members commended the work carried out on the website, making it more user friendly, appealing and complimented the new branded colours.</p>	

8.0	<p>Officers and Presenters then joined the Meeting. Kim Smyth left the Meeting.</p> <p><u>To adopt the Minutes of the 478th Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday 11th March 2021</u></p> <p>It was proposed by Councillor Fitzgerald, seconded by Alderman Bresland and resolved, that the Minutes of the 478th Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 11th March 2021 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
9.0	<p><u>Welcome</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Grainia Long to her first meeting to the Housing Council in her new role as Chief Executive.</p> <p>She also welcomed the Presenters, Amanda Stewart, Blair Anderson and Saira Khan from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum.</p>	
10.0 10.1 10.2	<p><u>Matters Arising from the Minutes</u></p> <p>Page 6/7 – Item 7 – Rural Housing Needs</p> <p>It was noted that arrangements were being made for a representative from the Rural Community Network to attend a future meeting to address Members of their specific work carried out on rural housing needs.</p> <p>Members Queries</p> <p>Queries by Members responded to since the last meeting, in relation to policy issues have been included in your papers for information:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Mark Cooper – Homelessness. • Councillor Anne-Marie Fitzgerald – Fermanagh & Omagh - Rural Housing. • All Members – DfC response on the Housing Executive's Historical Debt. 	Secretary
11.0	<p>Presentation on the work of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum</p> <p>Representatives from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum, Amanda Stewart, Blair Anderson and Saira Khan gave a presentation on the work they carry out through the Northern Ireland Youth Forum.</p>	

	<p>(Copies of the slides are appended to these Minutes – Appendix A).</p> <p>Ms Stewart explained the Northern Ireland Youth Forum is youth led, is run by young people and is all about young people. Any young person aged 11-25 can get involved, it was set up in 1979 by the Department of Education to represent the views of young people to government and other decision makers. Since 1979 the Youth Forum has received it's funding from the Department of Education via the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Forum believes that all young people have ideas and opinions worth listening to and we want to help you get involved in changing things in your school, community, and in society. They support young people to raise and discuss issues of importance to them and work at different levels on a wide range of exciting projects across communities.</p> <p>The representatives focused particularly on the homelessness Projects, that they have worked on and gave Members an in-sight into their personal experiences.</p> <p>Ms Stewart highlighted the Forums was launching Pinball II-Living Through Homelessness on Thursday the 22nd of April at 3pm to 3.30pm The live event to be streamed via the NIYF Facebook page. The animated video illustrates the journeys of three young people as they navigate their way through homelessness. The short film puts the spotlight on key issues affecting homeless young people and provides some recommendations on how they may be addressed. An invitation to join the event was extended to Members.</p> <p>Members commended the work of the Youth Forum, it was suggested that the Housing Council develop a working relationship with the Youth Forum for attendance at future meetings, in particular to focus on their continued work carried out with homelessness and welfare reform and it was also recommended that Members encourage their Councils to engage with the Forum to learn of the detrimental effects and experiences by young people and to hear their voices.</p> <p>Members expressed concern at the lack of one-bed accommodation for single young people faced with being homeless and the welfare reform 'priced out' of the private sector, resulting in more being forced into 'poor' quality private rented accommodation or shared housing and the related issues that this poses. Members felt that the issue of 'suitable' accommodation for all needs should be addressed and it was agreed to highlighted to the Department for Communities at the next meeting.</p>	<p>All Members</p> <p>Members</p>
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	<p>The Chair thanked the three representatives for a very informative presentation and looked forward to working with them in the future.</p>	
<p>12.0</p>	<p><u>Housing Executive’s Board Business</u></p> <p>On behalf of the Members, the Chair congratulated Grainia Long in her new role as Chief Executive and looked forward to working collaboratively with her in the future.</p> <p>It was noted that Ms Long will compile a written report presented at the Meetings, which will include performance related and strategic issues across the organisation.</p> <p>Ms Long highlighted the Housing Executive’s key business areas, under the following headings:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness <p>Ms Long reported that due to Covid, there has been 110% increase in temporary accommodation within the last year, as a result of the pandemic the Housing Executive’s ability to relet the accommodation has reduced. The Housing Executive are seeing repeat placements, evidence that too many young people are in a vicious circle.</p> <p>Members noted that a ‘reset plan’ on homelessness is being examined, which will include:-</p> <p>Temporary accommodation – increasing the number of units available through the voluntary sector, this is DfC funded through additional Covid funding announcement by the Minister and is very welcomed for homelessness and supporting people. The main concern is the temporary accommodation is only a temporary solution and other options will need to be sought.</p> <p>It was reported that the Housing Executive have put a bid in for its core homelessness budget and will keep Members briefed on the figures.</p> <p>Ms Long undertook to keep Members updated on the Reset Plan on Homelessness.</p>	<p>G Long</p> <p>G Long</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Housing Newbuild Programme. <p>The Housing Executive are satisfied with the end of year figures on the newbuild programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Executive's Business Plan. <p>The Housing Executive has approved a one-year Business Plan which was submitted to the Minister for approval. The 2022 Corporate Plan for the organisation will be soon underway and Ms Long welcomed input from the Housing Council to shape the outcomes.</p> <p>Following Ministerial approval of the Business Plan it will be presented to the Housing Council, in due course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Executive's Revitalisation Programme <p>Arising from the Minister's announcement on the future of the Housing Executive, it was noted that the 1st Meeting of the Programme Board has taken place. This is a partnership between the Department for Communities and the Housing Executive to implement a number of work-streams, in order to present options to the Minister by the end of March 2022.</p> <p>Ms Long offered to give a more details presentation on this issue later in the year.</p> <p>In response to the question on when is it anticipated that the Housing Executive will resume building houses, Ms Long explained that options have to be presented to the Minister by March 2022, and realistically it will be several years before the Housing Executive will be building to scale. She added that the Housing Executive are currently compiling Economic Appraisals for some smaller pilot schemes, which would also require Departmental approval.</p> <p>In relation to homelessness, Mr Cooper requested a breakdown of temporary accommodation available in each of the 11 Council areas.</p> <p>Ms Long confirmed that the level of reserves in the Housing Executive approximately £190 m. She explained that landlords can only use their reserves for specifics and legally the landlord reserves cannot be used to fund the regional side.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>G Long</p> <p>G Long</p> <p>Secretary</p>
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	<p>Members noted that this coming year there is an investment of £217m in stock improvements. It was agreed that a presentation will be provided on the investment in Housing Executive stock.</p> <p>Several Members supported the need for more housing in rural areas, as these village are continually become derelict and dilapidated, as the locals want to stay in their local areas and urged the Housing Executive to address these issues in rural areas when programming social housing.</p> <p>It was agreed that a presentation will be brought to a future meeting on the rural housing developments.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Ms Long for her comprehensive report.</p>	Secretary
13.0	<p><u>Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) 2019</u></p> <p>Members noted the Report.</p>	
14.0	<p><u>Older Peoples Housing Strategy Report</u></p> <p>Members requested a Presentation on the Strategy at a future Meeting.</p> <p>Mr Cooper referred to a project in Monkstown called 'Happi Principles' and asked that this be incorporated in the Presentation, for Members information.</p>	Secretary
15.0	<p><u>Social Housing Development Programme Housing Starts and Completions March 2021</u></p> <p>Members noted the report as circulated.</p>	
16.0	<p><u>Housing Executive's Scheme Starts March 2021</u></p> <p>Members noted the report as circulated.</p>	

17.0	<p><u>Date and Venue of Next Meeting – Thursday 11th March 2021 at 10.30 am via Webex</u></p> <p>It was noted that the Special Meeting with the Minister for Communities will be held on Wednesday, 5th May 2021 at 4pm via Webex.</p> <p>The next monthly meeting will be held on Thursday, 13th May 2021 via Webex.</p> <p>It was also noted that the above monthly meeting would encompass attendance from the Department for Communities, with the Housing Executive returning to the June Monthly Meeting.</p>	
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The Meeting concluded at 12.40 pm.

Appendix A



**NIYF Presentation
to NI Housing
Council**
Amanda Stewart
Blair Anderson
Saira Khan
15/04/21

WHO ARE WE?

- ✓ NIYF was established in 1979 by the Department of Education
- ✓ NIYF is Youth Led – run by Young People for Young People
- ✓ The current **Executive Committee** is made up of 12 young people 14 – 25 yrs
- ✓ Our other core values include; Equality and Inclusion, Collaboration, Transparency and Social Justice



NIHE SLA (Main Aims)

- ✓ To address the lack of young people engaged in housing issues/ services developing a succession plan moving forward.
- ✓ To attend monthly Central Housing Forum meetings and sub-meetings
- ✓ Youth attendance at NIHE Conferences



What we are currently working on!

- ✓ OCN Level 2 in Peer Mentoring
- ✓ Launch of Pinball 2 (Young People's Journeys through homelessness)
- ✓ Creation of Pinball 3 (Young People's Journeys out of homelessness)
- ✓ Meeting DFC Permanent Secretary and follow up meetings from the Department (Dec 20) Meeting DFC Minister (Jan 21)
- ✓ On-going input into Bill of Rights for NI (presentation to Adhoc Committee)
- ✓ Other on-going consultations e.g. Community Safety; ASB



Armagh, Belfast and Newry Youth Forum's

Housing Executive



Housing Executive



Main Aims

- ✓ To develop a Peer Mentoring Scheme to assist young people to navigate housing processes
- ✓ To develop appropriate on line presence to cater for the needs of young people homeless or threatened with homelessness
- ✓ To raise awareness of homelessness amongst young people



Housing Executive



What we are currently working on!

- ✓ Peer Mentors are under-going an intensive training programme tailored to them
- ✓ Supported 20 young people from October 2020 with a range of Housing and Homelessness issues
- ✓ Presented to a wide range of decision makers including; Education Minister, DfC Minister, The Executive Office and NIYF Youth Political Champions
- ✓ Working with Housing Rights to improve their website for young people
- ✓ On-going research into what information is currently available to young people in relation to Youth Homelessness – to be completed April 21 (Desk based research and 5 Focus groups completed)



Housing Executive



NIIF: Understanding Youth Homelessness

Let's check in
How are we feeling today
(on a scale of 1 to 10)?

What does home mean to you?

Share & Listen!
What does home mean?

NORTHERN IRELAND YOUTH FORUM

Housing Executive

DfC
Department for Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Young People's Key Asks

- ✓ Voice – Involve young people in the design, commissioning and evaluation of services
- ✓ Housing Options – NIHE to build good quality, affordable social housing to meet the needs of young people and families
- ✓ Our government departments to work together to tackle issues such as poverty, health, homelessness, education and youth unemployment.
- ✓ Meaningful Apprenticeship Programmes that pay young people a living wage





CHAIR
Councillor Anne-Marie Fitzgerald

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MAY HOUSING COUNCIL BULLETIN

The Housing Council met with the Minister for Communities, Deirdre Hargey MLA on Wednesday, 5th May. It was a very positive and productive meeting which focused on the future of social housing in Northern Ireland and the revitalisation of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The Northern Ireland Housing Council then met on Thursday, 13th May 2021 at 10.30 am via Conference Call.

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

Present by Video Conferencing

Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Chair)
Mark Cooper	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough (Vice Chair)
Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Allan Bresland	Derry City & Strabane District
Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough (Chair)
Mickey Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

Apologies

Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough Council

Discussions on the undernoted matters took place as follows:-
Paul Price and David Polley from the Department for Communities gave a verbal update on **Department's Top Housing issues**, which included the following items:-

- 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 then received a presentation on the Housing Executive's Older Peoples Housing Strategy Report.

Once the minutes of the meeting are ratified at the June Meeting, they can be accessed on the Housing Council website: www.nihousingcouncil.org

The next Housing Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 10th June at 10.30 am via conference call.

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

Contacts

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PARTNERSHIP PANEL MEETING – 21st April 2021

Outcome Note with Actions

The Northern Ireland Partnership Panel met for its second (virtual) meeting of 2021 on 21st April.

NB: *Official Meeting Minutes will follow in due course and released via the Communities Minister.*

The following Ministers were in attendance on 21st April 2021:

Minister Deirdre Hargey (Chair), Department for Communities; Minister Conor Murphy, Department of Finance; Minister Naomi Long, Department of Justice and Minister Robin Swann, 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; 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; Ald Alan McDowell, NILGA Office Bearer / Ards and North Down Borough Council; Cllr Joe Boyle NAC (NB: urgent business led to late apology from Ald Mark Cosgrove, Antrim & Newtownabbey BC, however his points were incorporated with Minister Hargey's agreement).

1. Shared Prosperity Fund

Minister Conor Murphy updated the Panel on the Shared Prosperity Fund. The fund is £1.5bn per annum across the UK. It is expected that the prospectus and the investment framework will be published by Parliament before the Summer recess; with allocations subject to the 2021 spending review. The Pilot for the Shared Prosperity Fund- the *Community Renewal Fund* - was announced in the Spring budget; it amounts to £220m in total; with an allocation of £11m for Northern Ireland.

The Executive has no function in the delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund nor the Community Renewal Fund Pilot. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will be administering the funds; Local Government will have to submit their project proposals directly to the MHCLG.

The new arrangements / funds will not fully replace what has been lost in terms of the European Structural Funds. The Executive is of the view that the central administration of the SPF Fund by MHCLG is the wrong way to administer the fund; it is a direct interference in devolved nation arrangements. The Finance Minister and the Executive will continue to engage with the Treasury and the Panel will be kept updated on progress.

Cllr Martin Kearney, in response to Minister Murphy's update commented that NILGA will be working to quality assure & localise the Shared Prosperity Fund both in preparation and delivery terms as Councils are central to its success. A concern raised by Cllr Kearney is that in GB,

councils will lead & coordinate the bidding process locally; however, in Northern Ireland - with the absence of local coordination of bids across the councils, community & voluntary sector and private sector; there could be duplication, with applications at cross-purposes to each other and with projects targeting the same cohort (particularly for skills). There is an opportunity before the Shared Prosperity Fund starts in 2022 to reshape MHCLG's thinking on this and central and local government should work together to do so.

Action: Strategic work will continue between local government and the Department of Finance on a shared approach, positioning our local authorities at the core of the Shared Prosperity Fund. It would also be mutually beneficial for the Department of Finance to link in with SOLACE / NILGA on their work in relation to the Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling Up Fund. Regional co-ordination model to ensure sound management / monitoring to be considered.

2. DAERA Update on Waste Management

Michael McCallion, Head of Waste Management at DAERA provided an update on behalf of Minister Poots. The last waste statistics quarterly report showed a decrease in the waste recycling rates. The waste from households recycling rate as a percentage of waste from householder arising had fallen to 49.6%; and this is particularly important as it is now below the EU 50% target which was due to be met by 2020. Next quarterly report is due out on 22.04.2021 and this will show if NI has reached the new set targets for end of 2020.

Within DAERA, the emphasis has been on increasing the quality and quantity of the resources which are collected for recycling. DAERA have a range of initiatives in place including the *Household Waste Collaborative Change Programme*.

The Department are currently consulting on a number of policies which will shape the strategic waste direction moving forward. In line with the rest of the UK, a public consultation was issued by DAERA recently on *extended producer responsibility for packaging* and the introduction of a *deposit return scheme for drinks containers*.

In the last financial year DAERA made available COVID funding of £15.2m to Councils to ensure the continuation of household waste collection. To date £12.5m has been paid out to Councils.

In response to Mr McCallion's update, Ald Billy Ashe MBE commented that local government appreciates the complexities around waste; however local government would be keen to see some urgency around waste management programmes. Waste management costs are approximately 25% of Council's annual gross spend. Moving forward local government envisage smarter technologies and a circular economy. However, the uncertainty of landfill sites and waste treatment continues to cause concern. *Local government is happy to step up and play a constructive role in partnership to identify solutions that can move us all forward.*

Action: Strategic work will continue between DAERA and Local Government to identify solutions to address waste management concerns and relevant central – local governance mechanisms re-considered.

3. Finances

o Budget 2021/2022

Minister Conor Murphy provided an update to the Panel. The final Budget for 2021 / 2022 has been agreed by the Executive; the budget position is a marginally improved one; with some flexibility negotiated for funding allocated for the COVID response to be carried over from the last financial year into this year's budget.

The Executive received £3.3bn additional funding last year for the COVID response; almost all of which has been allocated across the Departments, with very little returned to Treasury. The Executive are working within a *flat cash budget position* for 2021/2022. £900m has been received for the COVID response this year; a large proportion of the £900m has been allocated to Health.

Action: Continued development of strategic engagement between the Executive's Departments and local government. The economic recovery package has been supported in full and there will be interaction with central government and Councils to prioritise the limited funding in the best possible way.

In response to Minister Murphy's update on the Budget 2021/2022, Ald Alan McDowell commented that the Budget for 2021/22 is clearly a difficult one; the settlement does not provide the level of support needed to kickstart our economy as we emerge from the challenges of the past year. The Executive had hoped for a multi-year budget as did Councils, but the Task & Finish Group proposed and led by local government should help to address this and more sustainable councils going forward.

- **Local Government Finances – Task and Finish Group**

Cllr Matt Garrett, NILGA President and Chair of the Local Government Finances Task and Finish Group provided an update. The LG Finances Task and Finish Group provides formal two-tier political focus on local government finances. At the inaugural meeting of the TFG in January 2021 the short-term measures were agreed to ensure that councils have the investment to keep them sustainable in 2021 and 2022. Now, the focus of the TFG is *to secure a big change to the current Council financing model*— having a financial plan 75% reliant on rates income & services is unique in any part of government, is not sustainable, and will not provide consistent delivery & improvement of Council services.

Action: TFG Chair has called for a mid-year review meeting, scheduled for 8th September 2021 to review progress towards developing a new financing model for Councils. TFG Meeting outcomes will be brought to the October meeting of the Partnership Panel.

Per comments made prior to the Panel, attributed to Ald Mark Cosgrove, the rationale and outcomes of the sub group were re-enforced. The TFG may be stood down beyond next meeting; but **only** if there are solid options to politically scrutinise and for LG to have co-design in advance.

4. Programme for Government

Cllr Paul Greenfield emphasised the vital role of Councils in the emerging Programme for Government in his address to the Panel. For the emerging Programme for Government to work, and for sustainable recovery from this pandemic and any major global disruption, *localised investment, via better resourced Councils*, is key. It is also imperative that the *Partnership Panel has a regular monitoring role as the PfG develops and is implemented*.

Cllr Geraldine McAteer highlighted the importance of the Partnership Panel having a regular review and scrutiny role for the PfG; with TEO, DfC, NILGA and SOLACE initially charged with developing the right method to deliver and communicate this, considering their cross-cutting roles. The statutory role of the Partnership Panel ensures interdepartmental and all council engagement on this common and vital Strategy.

In response, Minister Hargey commented that in delivering the Outcomes based PfG, The Executive are taking cognisance of the lessons which have been learnt from COVID 19 which have clearly demonstrated *a whole government approach; local and central; is key when it comes to delivering public services*.

Minister Hargey added that she is also keen to see *alignment between the Programme for Government and the Council Community Plans*. With regards to the issues pertaining to PfG; when scrutiny has been completed; the Minister advised that the Partnership Panel will revisit the issue and discussions will take place between local and central government in the interim on the paper presented by Local Government and what the final Programme for Government document will look like.

Action: Partnership Panel will revisit local government recommendations for emerging Programme for Government, following co-ordinated work between bodies cited above.

5. Community Planning

In response to the COVID pandemic, and community planning adaptations, Cllr John Palmer advised that all Councils have substantively amended Community Plan Actions which take cognisance of our new reality. Actions for Community Recovery, Preventative Health and Economic Recovery are at the fore. He added that local government looks forward to seeing and being materially involved in the emerging outcomes from the Community Planning Review as laid out by the Department and recommendations for Community Planning changes moving forward.

Councillor Tommy Maguire added that *Community Planning has great potential as a real driver in the emerging Programme for Government*. Community Planning fully invested in and fully recognised on a multi-departmental basis as engines of growth and social cohesion across council areas would be a big gain in terms of the Programme for Government.

Councillor Maguire also referred to Carnegie's "*Embedding a Wellbeing Framework*" Report which provides clear recommendations to improve Community Planning including ringfenced multi-year funding and an augmentation review to include regeneration powers.

He asked the Chair to **consider the recommendations as outlined in paper PP03 as crucial, and to encourage the wider Panel's support for them**. Cllr Maguire also **proposed that an invitation be extended to the Carnegie Trust to the next Panel Meeting; - and for the Partnership Panel to consider in advance a Report on the emerging outcomes from the Community Planning Review**. Cllr Ruairi McHugh seconded Cllr Maguire's proposal.

Minister Hargey approved the recommendation for the Carnegie Trust to present to the Panel and this will be added to the Agenda for the October 2021 Partnership Panel Meeting.

Action: Invitation to be extended to the Carnegie Trust to the October 2021 Partnership Panel Meeting to discuss the Embedding a Wellbeing Framework Report.

Minister Hargey further advised that the Permanent Secretaries Group and SOLACE have established a Community Planning Group; jointly chaired by local government officials and DfC officials. The group has been tasked with producing recommendations on the new *Community Planning Support System* based on the recommendations of the Strategic Investment Board report towards a programme of support for Community Planning.

A series of Community Planning workshops have taken place and the Community Planning working group will present their work including a draft implementation plan for the new Community Planning Support System to the next meeting of the PSG / SOLACE which will take place in June 2021. An update on this work will also be provided at the next Partnership Panel meeting.

Action: An update on PSG – SOLACE Community Planning Support System and implementation plan will be provided at next Partnership Panel meeting.

6. Public Life Civility and Parity

o Civility in Public Life

Councillor Frances Burton raised with the Panel, the growing issue of online abuse and intimidation against elected members – MLAs, MPs and Councillors alike - on social media platforms. NILGA has been working with LGA, COSLA and WLGA in England, Wales and Scotland and now in Ireland to raise the profile of the issue.

Cllr Burton added that the abuse against elected members is deterring people from joining political life; existing Councillors are also saying they will not run for election again due the abuse they are receiving. Cllr Burton put forward 2 recommendations to the Panel:

- *To consider the cost of installing security equipment as an eligible expense for councillors in Northern Ireland;*
- *DoJ to continue to work with NILGA to raise awareness of the impact of harassment on politicians, to promote the #DebateNotHate campaign and to refine training & guidance materials to ensure compliance with Northern Ireland's legislation.*

Action: Minister Hargey advised that she has instructed officials within the Department to engage with NILGA; an update will be provided at the October Partnership Panel Meeting.

Minister Naomi Long advised that “online” abuse is an issue which was addressed by Judge Murrin in his recent review of the hate crime legislation, adding that it is vital that action is taken on this. Communications are not devolved issues; they are reserved issues at Westminster. DoJ is working closely with Westminster on this; an Online Safety Bill is on course at Westminster; DoJ is working to ensure that the needs / protections of the people here in Northern Ireland are included in that Bill and she has written to the Home Office and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that the recommendations made by Judge Murrin in his review of hate crime legislation are considered as they draft the legislation. DoJ will also be drafting a Hate Crime Bill for introduction early in the next mandate.

Action: DoJ officials will liaise with NILGA re #DebateNotHate online campaign.

Minister Long also spoke about the recommendation raised by local government on the provision of security equipment for Councillors. MLAs are able to access security equipment through expenses for their offices; however, this does not extend to security equipment at their homes. The NIO however operates a home protection scheme that offers advice and practical support to anyone who receives particular personal threat which is verified.

Action: DoJ officials to engage with NILGA on access to security equipment for Councillors.

o Maternity, Paternity and Sickness Pay for Councillors

Cllr Kerri Hughes addressed the Panel on the issue on maternity, paternity and sickness pay for Councillors. Local government are of the viewpoint that a Model Parental Leave Policy should be a joint aim to ensure that elected members, both MLAs and Councillors - are given parity with MPs in terms and conditions as regards Maternity and Paternity pay; and that consideration be given to legislation which specifies this entitlement.

In response to Cllr Hughes overview, Minister Hargey advised that there are no barriers in terms of local Councils deciding for the payment of allowances to Councillors who are in periods of sickness or on maternity /paternity leave, as long as they comply with the legislative requirements that are set out.

Minister Long added that the issue as raised is wider than providing leave and allowances for Councillors; it should also include arrangements to cover the work of elected members on leave. To allow for elected members, e.g., new mothers to take leave, there should be consideration of arrangements which would allow a Councillor to co-opt an alternate to provide maternity cover and to ensure continuity of service to constituents.

Action: A further discussion between DfC officials and local government to take place re arrangements / consideration of legislation change that offers parity of treatment for all elected members, regardless of their position across government.

7. Engagement with Councils on the co-design of the Social Inclusion Strategies

In NDNA there was a commitment made to the development of Social Inclusion Strategies around *anti-poverty* which includes child poverty; *disability*; *gender equality* and *sexual orientation*. In October 2020, interim DfC Minister Caral Ní Chuilín established 4 expert panels of academics and experts to gather information and evidence in each of the 4 respective themes and to develop reports. The 4 reports were published in March 2021 and are now available on DfC's website.

Action: As part of the co-design around the social inclusion strategies, Department has set up engagement sessions through SOLACE to ensure that local councils have the opportunity to be briefed, to make comment and to also feed into the development of each of the strategies.

It is anticipated the Social Inclusion Strategies will be presented to the Executive by December 2021 for sign-off; ready for implementation at the beginning of the next Assembly Mandate.

Councillor Robert Adair in his response to the Chair welcomed the intention to co-design the strategies with local government adding that it is important that co-design happens across the board as constituents channel concerns through their local representatives regardless of whether council is responsible for it or not. Cllr Adair also highlighted that Local Government has been lobbying strongly for progress on the Anti-Poverty Strategy and welcomed the push by the Department to bring this work to the fore.

Job Start Scheme: Ald McDowell welcomed Minister Hargey's announcement of the Jobs Start scheme adding that the scheme will contribute significantly to employment and economic recovery moving forward and communicating the scheme to as wide an audience as possible will be vital. Ald McDowell added that local government would like to see such a scheme extended to all age groups when taking into consideration the number of large businesses closing and the need to reskill workers of all ages. *Ald McDowell proposed that information is sought as to which Departments are responsible for particular age groups so that we can join things up?*

Minister Hargey agreed to this proposal and advised that the Department would provide an update on this. The Skills Agenda features highly in the development of the DfE's economic recovery plan. There is also cross over with DfC in terms of social security and labour market interventions.

Action: DfC and DfE to provide details of specific programmes; including schemes for people of all ages needing to reskill to re-enter the jobs market.

8. UK Levelling Up Fund

Stephen Barclay, Chief Secretary of the Treasury announced the a "Levelling Up Fund" on the 24th of February 2021 to boost growth in the devolved administrations. Minister Murphy provided an update to the Panel.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government will be administering this fund. **There is a call for applications currently; which must be submitted by 18th June 2021.**

The allocation for Northern Ireland is £20m per annum. The funding is spread over three priorities; *Transport*; *Regeneration/ Town Centre* investment; and *Culture* investment. The Executive is included as one of the bodies which can apply under the Transport priority. However, the Executive has been excluded from being able to apply for funding under Regeneration/ Town Centre, and Culture priorities. The Executive has no role in promotion or assessment of the Levelling Up Fund or any control over the objectives or criteria of assessment for the fund; all of which will be undertaken by the MHCLG. The Executive will not have any say in which projects are deemed successful.

Minister Murphy further advised that it is his understanding that arm's length bodies and local government are eligible to apply to the fund where they have legal autonomy to deliver; the guidance is available online. The Executive cannot provide guidance *however would encourage projects in line with the strategic vision in the Programme for Government.*

MHCLG have advised that a Framework for the Levelling Up Fund will become available; to date this has not been provided. The intention is to deliver the fund centrally from MHCLG to the devolved nations; and this is concerning. The Levelling Up Fund is principally Capital funding; the structure of the fund was changed in March 2021; it was increased to £4.8bn. The £800m initially earmarked for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales has since been absorbed into the overall fund and will be delivered centrally. **The guidance to put forward projects is available on the MHCLG website.**

In summing up, Minister Murphy commented that the Levelling Up Fund is another unsatisfactory approach to delivery of funding; it aligns itself with the general replacement of EU Funding which is going to see NI sold short and losing authority on how it is spent. The Minister and his Department will continue to challenge the Treasury on this matter.

Responding to Minister Murphy, Cllr Robert Burgess ***proposed that a coordinating task force be established at regional level involving local government, the private, education and third sectors to ensure real not perceived local & regional needs are addressed and that Northern Ireland can maximise benefits of the Levelling Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund.***

In response Minister Hargey commented that as reflected by Minister Murphy in his overview, the Executive has similar concerns and the Finance Minister and Executive will continue to address the concerns with the Treasury on how SPF, Levelling Up and other funds will be administered and will continue to engage with local government.

Action: Ongoing work in advance of April 2022 roll out to continue between and within departments and local government.

9. Youth Parliament

In his address to the Panel, Ald Billy Ashe MBE highlighted the value of the Youth Parliament in Northern Ireland and his concern that Stormont have ceased funding to it. Youth Parliament is an example of a programme which encourages young people to engage positively with the political world, especially in today's turbulent and ever evolving times, programmes which encourage young people into politics, and to step up and serve their communities must be welcomed, endorsed and supported. He added that he would value Minister Hargey's input to maintain this project.

Action: Minister Hargey will liaise with Minister Peter Weir about NI Youth Parliament and will provide a report to Ald Ashe and local government in advance of the October Partnership Panel meeting.

10. Virtual Meetings Legislation

Alderman Thomas McKeown commented on the expiration of the virtual meetings legislation on 7th May and asked the Chair if she could provide an update on the position with the new virtual meetings legislation? In response Minister Hargey advised that subject to agreement by the Executive, she intends to bring forward a Bill to extend the provisions for remote working for a further period. Once she has received Executive approval the Chair will update Members in due course.

Action: Minister Hargey will provide an update on proposed provisions to strive to enable continuation of virtual meetings beyond 7th May 2021 in due course.

11. DfC Definition of Affordable Housing

Minister Hargey advised that she is taking forward a piece of work to update the Councils in relation to the definition of affordable housing. The Department considers that it is timely to introduce a new definition of affordable housing for a number of reasons; it would serve as an enabler to bring a greater range of affordable housing products forward in terms of the market and to support the delivery of mixed tenure developments coming forward which will align to Council Local Development Plans. It will also contribute to increasing housing supply and reducing housing stress.

As it stands, the system is broken; there are over 40,000 people on the housing waiting list; over 30,000 of those people in housing stress, which has been heightened by the pandemic. Work has commenced to develop an evidence base for an intermediate rent model which delivers good quality, well managed homes with longer tenancies offering security of tenure for people; which will also sit between the social and market rents as well. The mixed tenure approach has a number of positive impacts including the creation of strong balanced, sustainable communities which will be at the heart of a forthcoming housing supply strategy which the Department is working with the NIHE on currently.

The definition will become available in April and the next steps are to liaise with key stakeholders on the research and to progress new affordable housing products within the available financial resources. *Minister Hargey advised that the Department can provide specific sessions with DfC Housing teams if Panel Members think that would be useful.* This work will also sit well with the work being progressed by Councils on their Local Development Plans.

Action: DfC to liaise with Local Government on work to progress affordable housing priorities.

Cllr Geraldine McAteer welcomed the work being taken forward by the Department to create more affordable and social housing to reduce housing stress. Cllr McAteer also congratulated Minister Hargey on securing an additional £162m for social housing as well as the 30% increase in house builds for 2020/21 which will be welcomed right across our community.

12. Climate Action

Cllr Ruairi McHugh referred Panel Members to the Climate Action Information piece as provided at PP06 and asked Panel Members to note the ongoing work and to *consider how joint central – local working on climate action be assessed for impact and improved* - as we move forward on the biggest issue facing society today. Derry City and Strabane District have shown great leadership, pioneering the way forward in terms of declaring the climate emergency and other Councils have followed DCSDC's lead on this. The purpose of Paper PP06 today is to encourage feedback across Departments on preparations and inputs into the COP26 event scheduled for Glasgow in November 2021.

13. Date of next Partnership Panel Meeting:

Wednesday 20th October 2021 at 11am.

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

Disclaimer: The Northern Ireland local government association (NILGA) endeavours to ensure that the information contained within our website, policies and other communications is up to date and correct. We do not, however, make any representation that the information will be accurate, current, complete, uninterrupted or error free or that any information or other material accessible from or related to NILGA is free of viruses or other harmful components. NILGA accepts no responsibility for any erroneous information placed by or on behalf of any user or any loss by any person or user resulting from such information.



Sinéad Duggan
Civic Support and Committee and Member Services Officer
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Email: Sinead.Duggan@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

Our Ref: TOF-1650-2021

30 April 2021

Dear Sinéad

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Resolution

Thank you for your correspondence of 30 April 2021 to the Minister for the Economy regarding the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council Resolution recognising the financial difficulties students are experiencing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As the Head of Higher Education Policy in the Department for the Economy, I have been asked to provide you with a response.

From the outset, let me just say that I genuinely appreciate how difficult the situation must be for all university students and I can assure you they have not been forgotten.

I am pleased to inform you that, earlier this year, Minister Dodds secured an additional £37.7m from the Executive to fund a financial support package for higher education. This package includes:

- £22m to fund a one-off discretionary payment of £500 to all students from the UK and EU who are in full-time higher education in Northern Ireland, whether that is in a university or further education college setting;
- £8.5m to address student financial hardship, digital poverty and to support student unions with mental health provision;
- £4.1m for the provision of a safe working, learning and research environment; and
- £3.1m to compensate universities for lost income arising from rental pauses and releasing students from accommodation contracts.

These additional resources will help universities target financial support at those students who are most in need.

Minister Dodds has also written to Northern Ireland's universities and university colleges, on behalf of students, to consider how they might support students by engaging with their private accommodation providers, as well as reviewing their own accommodation policies (where applicable) to ensure they are fair, transparent and have the best interests of students at heart.

Any Northern Ireland students experiencing financial hardship should first of all ensure that they have applied online at www.studentfinancenl.co.uk for all the financial assistance to which they may be entitled. The Department delivers financial support to

eligible Northern Ireland students through Student Finance NI, and by the end of November 2020 had provided £84m in maintenance loans and a further £37m in maintenance grants as a contribution towards students' living costs during the academic year, including the cost of accommodation.

Students at Northern Ireland's universities who find themselves in financial hardship may be eligible to receive an award from the Support Funds made available by the Department, and managed by the higher education institutions. Earlier this financial year, the Minister secured £1.4m from the Executive along with a further £1.4m from the Department's own budget for these Support Funds, making a total of £5.6m available to support students facing genuine financial hardship. This is even before Minister Dodds secured the additional hardship funds under the most recent support package.

Yours sincerely

CONOR BRADY
Higher Education Policy



Our Ref: Democratic Services

Date: 7 May 2021

Email: democratic.services@fermanaghomagh.com

To: All Council Chief Executives in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland

Re: Motion - Protection of Native Honeybees

At its meeting held on 4 May 2021, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council resolved that details of a Motion which it adopted at its April Council meeting, should be circulated to all Councils across the island of Ireland.

“Given Fermanagh & Omagh District Council’s commitment to the All-Ireland Pollinator Scheme, and noting previous Council decisions taken in relation to reducing the use of harmful pesticides, reducing grass and hedge cutting and encouraging protection and promotion of natural habitats for our bee population, this Council calls on the British Government, and on the relevant Stormont & Dáil Ministers, to oppose the importation of Italian honeybees onto this island, and to move to completely ban such actions in future.

The recently publicised move by a Kent bee keeper to avoid the import ban by importing 15 million Italian bees into Britain, via the island of Ireland, poses a serious potential threat to thousands of hives, to our native bee population and to its future viability.

The Ulster Beekeepers Association and Low Country Native Irish Honeybee Association have expressed serious concern in relation to the small hive beetle and to the potential threat posed to native black Irish honeybees (which academic studies have established as the “best gene of black bees in Europe”). These worries have been echoed by beekeepers in Britain.

Mindful of such risks, FODC calls on the British & Irish Government, as well as on the relevant Ministers in Stormont, Dáil Éireann & Westminster, to stop the import of Italian bees into Britain via the North of Ireland, as well as onto the island of Ireland, North and South, with or without the intent of forward exportation”.

The Council trusts you will support the Motion and the actions detailed therein.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison McCullagh".

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

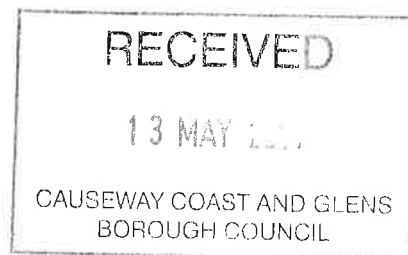
Our ref: C/111/2021

7 May 2021

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



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



Dear Mr Jackson

Re: Notice of Motion – Dental Services during Covid 19 Pandemic

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

“That this Council notes the severe impact that the Covid-19 crisis has had on people and communities across our district; offers our thanks and support to health service workers who have gone the extra mile to keep our communities safe; congratulates the Minister for Health on the successful implementation of the vaccination programme; expresses concern at the delay and disruption to routine health and dental services during the pandemic; further notes that women who have given birth have not been able to access the promise of free dental care in pregnancy and the 12 months following delivery of their child due to the cessation of dental services and; agrees to write to the Minister of Health asking him to explore an extension to the 12 month free dental care period for mothers who have given birth during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

This Council to also write to the other 10 Councils seeking their support for the Motion”.

Members of Newry, Mourne and District Council expressed strong support for this Motion and urge your Council to also support it.

Yours faithfully

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

SR/cd/NOM143/CS20.4.2021/21.10

24 May 2021

David Jackson
Chief Executive
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Cloonavin, 66 Portstewart Road
Coleraine
BT52 1EY

Via email: david.jackson@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

Dear David

I would advise you that at a recent meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council the under noted Resolution was agreed and ratified:

‘That this Council deplores the refusal of the Stormont authorities to permit a stone sculpture to mark the Northern Ireland centenary to be placed at the seat of government; instructs the Chief Executive to convey our dismay to the Speaker of the Assembly and call for reversal of the decision so that due respect can be shown to those who value our constitutional position as a part of the United Kingdom; and that this council will commemorate NI’s centenary with installations of stones depicting the map of Northern Ireland and 100 years celebrated and inscribed at Comber Square, Ards Conway Square, Bangor Castle, Donaghadee War Memorial and Holywood town centre, and asks officers to bring back a report outlining costs and possible inclusion in the centenary budget for same, and will write to all other councils to follow our example.’

The Council would welcome your response to this matter.

Yours sincerely



STEPHEN REID
Chief Executive

Developing Local Government 2021-2023



**Councils
Make It
Happen**

#councilsmakeithappen



A. Local Government's Vision & Development – A Framework to the 2023 Election – Council Consultation.

Emerging from the pandemic is a time for **reflection, action and new vision**.

Strong local government, investing in local people and places, with 11 councils empowered, skilled and resourced, delivering high-quality leadership, services and representation for the whole community, working in innovative, accountable partnership.

NILGA sees this vision for local government as key to a better democracy and improved public services across NI.

Reflecting on the role of councils, at the height of a world pandemic, local government delivered everything required of it, and more besides. All councils did so efficiently and effectively, tailoring their decisions and **actions** to local need. Over £130 million in service and other Covid related income deficits placed already fragile finances on red alert. Dynamic partnership, within councils and between councils, in the latter instance co-ordinated by NILGA and SOLACE on an emergency footing throughout 2020/21, through to today, has led to the recovery of much of this deficit from the NI Executive and Treasury, new investment for 2021/22 to keep councils sustainable, and a new impetus to re-model how councils are funded, to mitigate against red alerts of any type ever again.

Prudent rates struck by all councils for 2021/22 reflect the deficit recovery funding and the efficiencies deployed to minimise ratepayer impact and maximise essential service delivery. Understanding the roles and responsibilities, together with the potential within local government, was stepped up as part of evidence lobbying and negotiation. "Councils Make it Happen" visually illustrates the community and collective value of local government in Northern Ireland and this NILGA campaign continues well into recovery and 2021.

However, as council members and officers know, there is no time to waste. Councils, NILGA and SOLACE will continue the strategic push for more resources, locally designed and applied by local government, on matters like the Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up Funds – multi-million, multi-annual investment designed to replace EU funds which councils spent wisely in their communities. Similarly, regeneration powers and resources must come equally and fully to all councils. The Councillor Code of Conduct has outlived its original design back in 2015. Experience has taught everyone – particularly today's councillors - that we cannot offer this Code to new elected members without major revisions. New ways of working with central government must be ramped up, with councils protected legislatively for any new burdens coming to them, and with members and officers alike gaining new skills, learning and development to keep pace with technological change and a **modern Programme for Government** (PfG) that has locality-based budgets at its policy centre, and which recognises Community and Local Development Planning as being key to its delivery – fuelling engines of local economic development, environmental custody and social

cohesion. We have neither the budget nor the wish to outsource the future of local government to consultants. We want to tap into the excellence and commitment that is within.

This **two-year framework** takes us to the Council Elections of 2023. NILGA seeks high level feedback and input from each Council in regard to finalising and fulfilling this Vision, the actions and their development. Feedback from the 11 councils will lead to the development of a series of regional actions, applied and agreed locally, by each sovereign council. As part of it, NILGA's governance, resources and products will be aligned to ensure that all member councils and strategic partners, working within and alongside the Association, do so in an explicitly joined up manner on matters which strengthen local government.

Collaboration works. Other regional bodies (like SOLACE and the Local Government Training Group) and council services (like waste management, local development, community and emergency planning) will benefit from innovation and improvements. **Local government is changing. This framework and consultation seeks to ensure that councils are the change makers rather than having changes imposed on them by other institutions and /or events.**

The framework has been drawn from substantial engagement and work across councils pre and during pandemic, by NILGA and others, including the corporate responses to formal consultation on devolution and the future roles and resources of local government in the Programme for Government. It provides a platform for the necessary evolution of councils as we enter a totally new economic, health and public service landscape here and around the world. It offers self-determination and enables the sector's development, and whilst focussing on councils themselves it will materially assist in making the case for stronger local government to the devolved Assembly and nationally, together with other key strategic partners across business and the community.

The framework will underpin and influence NILGA's Corporate (Electoral Term) Plan to June 2023 and its annual work plan for & with councils but also looks ahead, beyond the two-year core period, in terms of forecast activity, to assist the Association and the wider sector to *better plan and to be more sustainable*. It provides explanatory context and suggested delivery detail, abridged into five themes and three main emphases.

5 Key Themes Identified:

- 1. Council sustainability & improvement (e.g., devolution, training, capacity, ethics)**
- 2. Climate Action (e.g., waste/ circular economy, LGCAN, clean air, COP26 outcomes)**
- 3. Community & Economic Development (e.g., anti-poverty, new economy, recovery, skills, digital connectivity & regeneration)**
- 4. Wellbeing and Community Planning (e.g., changing demographics, mental health, biodiversity, Comm Planning review)**
- 5. Planning and infrastructure (e.g., legislation review, LDPs, Planning Training & Conduct, Roads, NI water, green infrastructure)**

Councils, NILGA and SOLACE, including through the NI Partnership Panel and the Association's Policy & Learning Networks, are pinpointed as being the primary means to achieve both the vision and the actions associated with it.

It must be stressed that this framework is by necessity dynamic, complementary and propositional, not analytical, duplicative nor rigid. It offers local government the chance to look ahead, self-direct and improve, with a strong vision to be developed locally by each council and regionally through NILGA & SOLACE.

Noting the five themes above, delivering actions across them will be important. Three categories for action are offered for discussion below:

A. Corporate Relations, Performance & Sustainability

Corporate relations are of course owned by the 11 sovereign councils, NILGA and SOLACE. The sector has many corporate partners locally, regionally, nationally and internationally who, in the new landscape post pandemic, should materially assist local government whether in terms of skills development, new investment opportunities, legislative / policy guidance, best practice in service delivery, and more. NILGA has appointed eleven Strategic Partners that work closely and accountably with the Association to help develop and inform practical and policy ideas for strengthening local government in Northern Ireland.

Actions for consideration:

- (i) Accountable strategic partnerships outside of political and government centres enable community, business, social, environmental and improvement experience to be brought to bear when making decisions, defining policy and advocating positive change. These partners will be scoped out and assessed to ensure they add real value & impact to the Association and to councils. In turn, the assessment will result in new partners and post pandemic policy, investment, capacity and sustainability opportunities for local government – from July 2021. List of existing strategic partners attached per Appendix I
- (ii) A new constitution for NILGA considering Membership, Executive and Networks for AGM 2021 and developed thereafter with councils
- (iii) NILGA Policy & Learning Networks work plus other regional, and sub regional member – officer groupings should be fully scoped to hone added value / impact – from Aug 2021
- (iv) NILGA – SOLACE Protocol & Workplan contemporised & refined by end November 2021.

B. Strategic Policy & Governance

NILGA is constituted to drive in partnership the development of strategic policy and forward planning for the sector and suggests a focus on a small number of key actions, working collaboratively, resulting in more effective policy, legislation and resources for the 11 local councils.

Actions for consideration:

- (i)** An effective Partnership Panel materially linked to the Programme for Government, other strategic member – officer groupings, formally reviewed by end November 2021 (with the Department for Communities) and lobbying central government in respect of performance led evidence-based devolution and sustainable council finances with practical benefits to services, citizens and governance, from July 2021
- (ii)** Research to consider merits of a new Public Affairs Service, to include an evaluation of alternatively available services – designed to provide scanning & reporting of Assembly & Parliamentary committees & questions alongside liaison with MLAs and MPs individually and on a party basis to improve policy & legislation input by / affecting local government & local areas – by end October 2021
- (iii)** Research to consider merits of a strengthened Shared Policy Unit to inform and be informed by our sector: development of capacity and capability – existing (NILGA – Councils) service, cost benefit analysis to strengthen, structure, strategic partners involved, research and application of best international practice, better gathering and use of local data and evidence options by end October 2021 and establish thereafter if appropriate.

C. Improvement & Investment

NILGA will develop and refine its own partnerships ensuring clear, added value, to strengthen links across the public, private & voluntary sector and to offer opportunities for local government to innovate, improve performance and enhance its services, knowledge, skills & expertise. Apart from within NI, we will partner with UK, Irish and other local government associations to (evidence-based) lobby on policy & financial matters which have the potential to affect the local government sector positively or negatively.

As we move through a precarious period for public sector finances, alongside the ending of EU funding and the construct of replacement investments, we will ensure the local government sector is adequately resourced and new models of resourcing including rates re-modelling, are developed, so that councils can continue to deliver for communities.

Actions for consideration:

- (i) Progress to be made on sector improvement and data/evidence provision – owning our own information. Research required – including a comparative exercise with other jurisdictions, by end December 2021, to consider merits of a Service Improvement Hub (if all council desired / owned) and Data Centre (inc. virtual library) by June 2022
- (ii) Progress of shared services & embedding innovation at the heart of local government. This has the potential to generate substantial efficiency savings and revenue generation if the sector takes risks and challenges itself. To do this NILGA – in partnership with all councils - will scope the following actions:
- The delivery of action research – in partnership with SOLACE & councils - on shared services, transformation & improvement to identify what local government requires and can develop, from September 2021 and to align with and adapt *existing* models of improvement.
 - Research to be completed during 2021 on an Innovation by Councils Programme, to scope the potential for innovation and technology to propel local government, identify & learn from best practice and aligned to outcomes of LGTG review and to NILGA's Regional Learning & Development Programme, so as to identify and apply innovative practice in local government, reporting in January 2022.
 - Consider partnership with an organisation(s) to promote & deliver an incentivised “Innovation Challenge” for local government senior practitioners from October 2021
- (iii) Sustainable Funding for Local Government: as councils are place shapers, additional investment in local government brings direct benefit for local communities. We will work to ensure that services and funds that can be best delivered by local government are entrusted to local government and that councils' values are better understood by the rest of government, utilising the Task and Finish Group on Sustainable Councils Finances and reporting in October 2021
- (iv) Digital Technology for members, officers and service improvement: Investigate opportunities for NILGA / SOLACE and other regional bodies to drive and / or promote new offerings for the sector. This could include (research in 2021):
- Increased digital delivery of regional representation, co-ordination and services, to include webinars, policy led training / learning within the Regional Elected Member Development Group and courses
 - Retention of non-digital regional representation, co-ordination and services if it is best to do so, including Conferences and interactive policy development across councils
 - Consideration of the merits of a subscription-based statistics service via the Data Centre for local government and other interested parties to provide dynamic up to date data and evidence required for decision making.

B. Getting It Done in Good Time & Measuring Success

Consultation with Councils will subsequently be collated, referred to all councils and a timeline and measurement tool developed.

Measuring success post-finalisation will very much depend on this being clearly communicated, largely kept to time and outcomes being positively recognised by member councils / partners.

To this end, NILGA & SOLACE will establish a regional and all council inclusive means to assess feedback, and design & manage the framework, with formal results against targets reports provided to the NILGA Executive / SOLACE and onward to councils on a twice-yearly basis in April and September, from 2022.

All work will be completed within existing budgets unless a Business Case for any additional service or personnel is provided within the NILGA – SOLACE protocol.

Good communication in relation to this development framework and its roll out will be vital – across NILGA, SOLACE & councils. Existing communications e.g., for the “Councils Make it Happen” campaign will be utilised and NILGA & SOLACE networks & Council Standing Committees will be formally communicated with to ensure scrutiny.

C. Practical Next Steps

Approval of the Consultation Framework by both NILGA & SOLACE by 20th May 2021, dissemination to councils, as an emerging regional programme, for comment by 9th July 2021.



D. Appendix I – Strategic Policy Partners

See <https://www.nilga.org/about/nilga-strategic-partners> for more detail, but these are:

Association of Public Services Excellence, Centre for Effective Services, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Development Trusts NI, Enterprise NI, Federation of Small Businesses, Inner City Trust, Strategic Investment Board, Stratagem, Sustainable NI and Social Enterprise NI.

E. Appendix II – Glossary of Terms

Service Improvement Hub – supporting, promoting and improving local government

- Wholly local-government owned and driven.
- Using peer support - experienced councillors and senior officers from across the UK, who support and challenge councils to improve themselves
- Enabling councils to share good practice, with good ideas shared on the NILGA website.
- Elected member development programmes helping councillors become better leaders.
- Promoting the development of local government’s management and workforce?
- Advising councils on improving customer service and value for money.
- Helping councils to tackle difficult challenges.

Public Affairs Service

- Supporting councils as they manage an ever-growing number and variety of responsibilities.
- Informing the NILGA membership of parliamentary and Assembly activity, and political monitoring.
- Developing relationships with MLAs, MPs and parties to influence Assembly & Parliamentary policy & legislation
- Providing support for campaigns

Data and Evidence Centre

Councils possess large amounts of data covering every aspect of their daily activities. This resource is valuable and provides an opportunity for transformative change through effective use in decision making. Transforming data to knowledge with the help of analytics can provide councils with additional information which can help to design better policies and improve business operations.

- A trusted source of information on local government, working closely with NISRA and F&H Education Institutions.
- Aiming to be the NI local government’s centre of choice for data and research.
- Acting as a ‘hub’ of knowledge about and for NI councils, reaching beyond into a wider network of experts, organisations and innovators.
- Developing high impact good practice models and concepts.
- Providing a ‘virtual library’ of information about and for local government in Northern Ireland

Shared Policy Unit

A wholly local government owned and driven shared unit that would

- deal with long-term, cross-cutting issues;
- develop and co-ordinate regional policy for the sector;
- create a flexible pool of ‘experts’ who can be deployed quickly on developing issues – utilising the knowledge and experience of the officer groups;
- enable council officers to co-locate and work with NILGA staff on an ad-hoc basis
- be supported by SOLACE and the NILGA Executive Committee – working at a senior level to scrutinise policy centrally, and link to government.

Innovation Working Group

- Harnessing the power of innovation to accelerate progress towards achieving the vision, aims and objectives of local government
- Initiating, catalysing and enabling the scaling of innovations across the 11 councils – in technological, social, financial, policy and service delivery areas.
- Showing leadership in supporting collaborative efforts among councils and their partners.
- Membership drawn from council officers, with strategic advisors. Reporting to NILGA Executive & SOLACE.

Research and Advisory Service

- Aligned to the Service Improvement Hub, Data centre and Shared Policy Unit;
- Providing an agile proactive and responsive policy research and advisory service on key regional issues, to ensure the policy positions taken by the sector are contemporary, evidence-based and credible.

F. Response by Council

A corporate response by Council is strongly sought, ideally by Friday, 9th July 2021, with high level consideration of

(i) The suitability or otherwise of the Vision Statement

(ii) The suitability or otherwise of the 5 main themes identified

(iii) The suitability or otherwise of each of the 11 actions listed

(iv) Comment by the Council in regard to its own ideas and suggested actions on how the local government sector can be strengthened in a post pandemic environment in the run up to the Local Council elections scheduled for May 2023.

Please send Council’s submission to s.little@nilga.org for the attention of NILGA’s Chief Executive. Thank you for your comments and your committed partnership within the local government sector.