



GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE



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Foreword

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is a creature of statute. It was originally established as a public authority and independent body corporate under the Housing Executive Act (Northern Ireland) 1971, which was subsequently repealed. This status continues under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. The Housing Executive, as a public authority is also subject to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which obliges it to carry out its functions having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between certain specified groups of people.

As a statutory body the Housing Executive's functions, duties and powers are defined by statute which are to be found chiefly in the various Housing (Northern Ireland) Orders from 1981-2003; the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995; the Social Security Administration (NI) Act 1992; the Domestic Energy Efficiency (Grants) Scheme 2002; the Housing Support Services Order (NI) 2002; the Housing Support Services Regulations (NI) 2003; and the Housing (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

Those statutory functions, powers and duties include the following:

Functions

- The regular examination of housing conditions and housing requirements.
- Drawing up wide ranging programmes to meet housing needs.
- Establishing housing information and advisory services.
- Consulting with District Councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Council.

Powers

- Effecting the closure, demolition and clearance of unfit houses.
- The possession of unoccupied houses.
- Carrying out improvements or repairs by agreement.
- Entry to land for the purpose of survey, valuation or examination.
- Making vesting orders in respect of land and the disposal of land held.

- Administering Housing Benefit to the public and private rented sectors.
- Undertaking the role of the Home Energy Conservation Authority for Northern Ireland.
- Administering the 'Supporting People' initiative.
- Administering Private Sector Grants.
- Provision of caravan sites for members of the Traveller Community.

In addition the Housing Executive carries out a number of duties including:

- Effecting the improvement of the condition of the housing stock.
- Identifying the need for the provision of new social houses.
- Managing its housing stock in Northern Ireland.
- Working with a wide variety of statutory and voluntary organisations to help deal with homeless issues.

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is the single strategic housing authority in the Province managing a stock of approximately 90,000 homes and employing around 3,000 people. The organisation is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) operating through the provision of public funds from the Department for Social Development. The Minister responsible for the Department for Social Development is accountable to Parliament for the policies and performance of the Housing Executive including its use of resources and the policy framework within which it operates.

The Housing Executive's role is to assess housing need in Northern Ireland and progressively to meet that need directly, or by facilitating or enabling other agencies to do so. The Housing Executive promotes high standards of new house building, repair, maintenance, housing management and general housing advice. Close relationships exist with registered housing associations, which now build most new social housing.

The Housing Executive is also the Home Energy Efficiency Authority for Northern Ireland. Financial pressures and issues such as Equality, Human Rights, new Targeting Social Need, Best Value and Tenant Participation, are particular influences on the Housing Executive's work, as is the search for innovative ways of providing and managing social housing and the drive for better performance year on year.

Housing Executive Board Members shall conduct themselves as follows, in accordance with 'The Seven Principles of Public Life':

1) Selflessness

Housing Executive Board Members shall take decisions solely in terms of the public interest and not to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, friends or family members.

2) Integrity

Housing Executive Board Members shall not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

3) Objectivity

Housing Executive Board Members shall make choices on merit in carrying out public business including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits.

4) Accountability

Housing Executive Board Members are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

5) Openness

Housing Executive Board Members shall be as open as possible about all decisions and actions they take giving reasons for their decisions and restricting information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

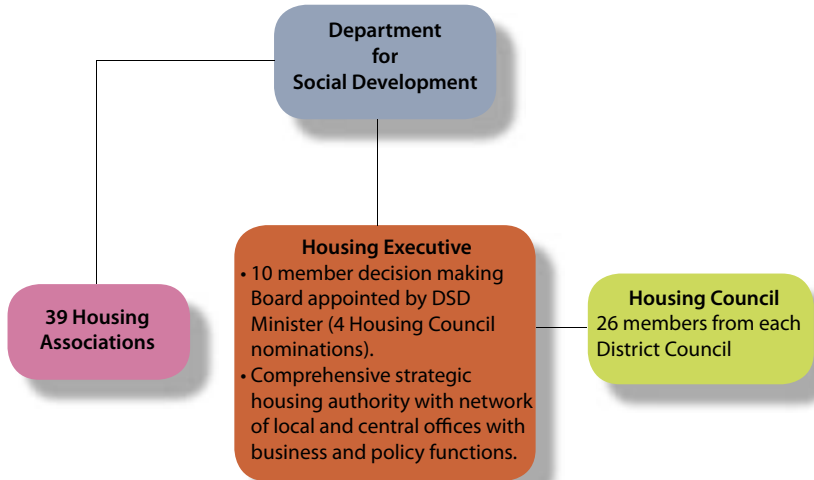
6) Honesty

Housing Executive Board Members have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interests.

7) Leadership

Housing Executive Board Members shall promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Structural Arrangements



The Board meets on the last Wednesday of every month. The business conducted at the Board is reported monthly through 'Executive Briefing' which is available on the Housing Executive's website: www.nihe.gov.uk

Leadership

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) is managed by a Board comprising of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, four nominees from the Northern Ireland Housing Council and four other Board Members.

Approval for appointment to the Board is at Ministerial level with additional approval sought from the Secretary of State for non Housing Council nominees. The Permanent Secretary of the Department for Social Development is responsible for making appointments to the Board.

The Board in discharging its responsibilities delegates the day to day management of the Housing Executive to the Chief Executive, supported by the Deputy Chief Executive and four operational Directors.

The Board

Chairman - Brian Rowntree

The Chairman of the Board is accountable to the Minister for the organisation's performance. He is responsible for providing effective strategic leadership on matters such as:

- discharging the Board's statutory duties;
- encouraging high standards of propriety and the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources;
- taking proper account of guidance issued by the Minister or the Department (DSD);
- representing the Board to the general public; and
- ensuring the Board meets at regular intervals throughout the year.

Mr Brian Rowntree was appointed as Chairman in May 2004. He has held a number of previous Public Appointments at Chair and Non Executive Director level in Criminal Justice, Health and Further Education and has chaired corporate governance forums in Northern Ireland and on a cross border basis. He is immediate past Vice-President of Cecodhas – European Social Housing Forum.



Vice Chair - Anne Henderson

The Vice Chair provides assistance to the Chairman in the carrying out of his responsibilities, deputising for him as and when necessary. The Vice Chair carries out other functions assigned by the Board. Currently the Vice Chair chairs the Audit Committee of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mrs Anne Henderson trained and qualified as a Chartered Accountant in Belfast after which she spent three years as an auditor with Time Warner (Europe and America) before moving into the insolvency division of BDO Stoy Hayward in Belfast. Anne has been a Member of the Board since 1995.



The Board

Ciaran Brolly

Mr Ciaran Brolly, a member of the Board from 2001, was a Senior Lecturer with the North West Institute of Further and Higher Education where he lectured in Human Resource Management. He has a range of experience in the public and private sectors.



Brendan Curran

Councillor Brendan Curran, appointed to the Board in 2008, is a member of Newry and Mourne District Council, the Northern Ireland Housing Council and the Southern Education & Library Board. He was previously appointed to the Board 2006-2007.



Alistair Joynes

Mr Alistair Joynes, a Board Member from 2001, is a managing partner in Alistair Joynes Associates, a Management Consultancy firm. He is a Board Member on Southern Health and Social Care Trust and an arbitrator with the Labour Relations Agency.



Brendan Mackin

Mr Brendan Mackin is the Director of the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre, Chair of the Board of the Belfast European Partnership, a member of the Fair Employment Tribunal, the European Union Transitional Funds Monitoring Committee and Open Door Housing Association. He was appointed to the Board in 2001.



The Board

Eamonn O'Neill

Councillor Eamonn O'Neill, a Board Member from 2005, was a school teacher and Vice Principal. He founded and chairs Castlewellan Regeneration. Mr O'Neill was a long time member of the Northern Ireland Housing Council and has previously been appointed to the Board of the Housing Executive from 1995 to 1998. He is a Member of Down District Council and was appointed a member of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.



Jenny Palmer

Councillor Jenny Palmer has been involved in community work for 4 years and was elected to Lisburn City Council in May 2005. She has been a member of the Housing Council for the last 4 years and was nominated as a Housing Council representative on the Board of the Housing Executive in 2007.



Jim Speers

Councillor Jim Speers, a Board Member from 2005, served as Mayor of Armagh City & District Council from 1996 to 1997. He is a long-serving Member of the Northern Ireland Housing Council and was Chairman from 1991 to 2005.



Dr Monica Wilson

Dr Monica Wilson was appointed to the Board from 2004 and is Chief Executive of Disability Action. She is an advisor to the Employers' Forum on Disability U.K. and is currently President of the European Union of Supported Employment.



Corporate Responsibilities

Compliance

- 1) Ensuring compliance with any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds.
- 2) Ensuring the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority, delegated authority, guidance agreed with the Department and any other conditions relating to the use of public funds.
- 3) Ensuring the highest standards of corporate governance are observed by the Housing Executive at all times.
- 4) Ensuring compliance with Freedom of Information requirements and the Code of Practice on access to Government information.

Strategic Planning & Control

- 1) Establishing the Housing Executive's strategic direction within the policy and resources framework agreed with the Minister.
- 2) Overseeing the production of a Corporate Plan including determination of key strategic objectives and targets.
- 3) Overseeing performance including financial performance, the efficiency and effectiveness of operations and the quality of services.
- 4) Taking due account of risk analyses and performance measures.
- 5) Ensuring the proper delegation of responsibility for specified matters to individual Members or Committees of the Board.

Sustainable Development

- 1) Operating within the framework of the Sustainable Development Strategy.
- 2) Operating sound environmental policies.

Individual Board Members Responsibilities

Board Members:

- 1) Must comply with the Code of Practice for Housing Executive Board Members (2006).
- 2) Must act in good faith and in the best interests of the Housing Executive.
- 3) Must not seek to use their position for political or personal gain or to promote private interests and must comply with the rules in relation to the acceptance of gifts and hospitality.
- 4) Must not occupy paid party political posts or make political speeches or engage in political activities on matters directly affecting their work as a Board Member, unless they are local Councillors or Peers.
- 5) Must declare and update any personal or business interests pecuniary and non-pecuniary, and those of family connections, which may conflict with their role as a Board Member.
- 6) Must not participate in discussion or determination of matters where they have a declared interest.

Board Members have a duty to:

- 1) Conduct all dealings with the public in an open and responsible way.
- 2) Use resources to good effect with propriety.
- 3) Ensure the safeguarding of public funds and take appropriate measures for ensuring that the Housing Executive does not exceed its powers or functions.
- 4) Ensure that the Housing Executive includes a full statement on the use of resources in its Annual Report and Accounts and to publish such Annual Report and Accounts.

Personal Liability

Exceptionally legal proceedings may be brought against individual Members. Government however has indicated that those who have acted honestly and in good faith will not be held personally liable except where the Member has acted recklessly.

Audit Committee

The Board has an Audit Committee with a Membership chosen by the Board. The Audit Committee's responsibilities overlap with those of the Housing Executive's accounting officer (the Chief Executive). The main functions of the Audit Committee are:

- 1) To help promote the highest standards of propriety in the use of public funds and encourage accountability for the use of those funds.
- 2) To improve the quality of financial reporting and to promote a climate of financial discipline and control.
- 3) To promote the development of internal control systems, including risk management.

The Committee is authorised by the Board to investigate any activity within its terms of reference and to obtain independent professional advice if it considers this necessary.

The Board as an Employer

The Board will seek to ensure:

- 1) That it complies with all relevant legislation and employs suitably qualified staff who will discharge their responsibilities in accordance with the high standards expected of Housing Executive staff.

- 2) That management practices are adopted that ensure effectiveness, efficiency and value for money in service provision and that recruitment and advancement procedures are applied on the basis of merit and equality of opportunity for all staff.
- 3) That staff and Board Members have appropriate access to expert advice and training and that the staff code of conduct enables staff to raise concerns about propriety with a nominated officer or Board Member.
- 4) That it has access to the information and advice required to make the necessary decisions in relation to performance-related pay.
- 5) That the performance of the Chief Executive and other senior staff is monitored.

Chief Executive - Mr Paddy McIntyre



The Chief Executive is the Housing Executive's Accounting Officer responsible to the Permanent Secretary as the Accounting Officer for the Department for Social Development.

The Chief Executive has responsibility for:

- The overall organisation, management and staffing of the Housing Executive.
- The propriety and regularity of the public finances under his control.
- The Housing Executive's procedures in financial and other matters including conduct and discipline.
- Ensuring that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded.
- Maintaining the Board Scheme of Delegations through the interfaces with the Chief Executive's Management Committee, the Chief Executive's Business Committee and the Housing and Regeneration Clearing House Committee.
- The promotion by leadership and example of the values embodied in the Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life.
- Ensuring that appropriate advice is tendered to the Board on all these matters.

The Chief Executive's Business Committee



Stewart Cuddy
Deputy Chief Executive



Clark Bailie



Maureen Taggart



Colm McCaughley



John McPeake



Imelda McGrath

Stewart Cuddy - Director of Corporate Services/Deputy Chief Executive

Clark Bailie - Director of Finance

Maureen Taggart - Director of Personnel & Management Services

Colm McCaughley - Director of Housing & Regeneration

Dr John McPeake - Director of Design & Property Services

Imelda McGrath - Head of Information & Secretariat

The Chief Executive's Business Committee meets every Monday morning and the business conducted at this meeting is reported to Board Members on a weekly basis.

Regular Reports to the Board

The following are the main reports submitted to the Board:

Monthly: Business Plan Monitor; Financial Monitor

Quarterly: Audit Committee Report;
Performance Review;
Risk Management

6 Monthly: Housing Strategy Updates e.g. West Belfast Housing Strategy;
Insolvency & Determinations Register; Contractor & Consultants Adjudication & Litigation Register

Annually: Annual Budget
Annual Report & Accounts
Audit Committee Annual Report to Board
Communications Plan
District Housing Plans
Draft Corporate & Business Plans
Research Programme & Reports
Review of Housing Market
Social Housing Development Programme

As Required: 'Dear Accounting Officer' Letters

Regular Reports to Audit Committee

The following are the main reports submitted to the Audit Committee:

Monthly: Internal Audit Recommendation Monitor
Risk Management
Internal Audit Final Report Summaries
Housing Benefit Fraud & Error Reports
Scheme Inspection Reports
Divisional Inspection Unit Reports
Fraud Reports
Schedule of Losses & Payments

Annually: Audit Committee Self Assessment Report
Audit Committee Annual Report
Northern Ireland Audit Office Reports

As required: 'Dear Accounting Officer' Letters

This document is a summary of the roles and responsibilities of Northern Ireland Housing Executive Board Members and Chief Executive which are set out within the 'Code of Practice for Northern Ireland Housing Executive Board Members (2006)'.

**Housing
Executive**

www.nihe.gov.uk
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