

**MINUTES OF THE 657TH MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 24TH FEBRUARY 2016 AT 10.00 AM IN THE BOARDROOM, 2 ADELAIDE STREET, BELFAST**

The Chairman asked Members to switch off their mobile phones or as a minimum, switch them to silent.

**1. PRESENT**

Mr D Hoodless                      Chairman – Joined the meeting at 10.10 am

Professor P Roberts              Vice Chairman - Chaired the meeting until  
10.10 am

Mr P Brett

Mrs C Elattar

Mr B Keery

Mr G Lomax

Mr J McCall

Mr K Millar

Mr D Wilson

**2. IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr C Bailie    Chief Executive

Mr T McCartney    Director of Corporate Services

Mrs H Carty              Acting Director of Finance – joined the meeting at  
10.05 am

Miss S McCauley    Director of Regional Services

Mr G Flynn              Director of Landlord Services

Mr P Isherwood      Director of Asset Management

Mr J Blease              Head of Corporate Communications

Miss A Neill              Company Secretary

Mrs J Boyd              Board Secretary

**3. APOLOGY**

An apology for absence was received from Mrs H Legge.

#### **4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The Chairman asked if any Member had an interest to declare in relation to any item on the Agenda. No interests were declared.

#### **5. MINUTES AND ACTION NOTE/MATTERS ARISING**

##### **1) Minutes of the 656th Board Meeting held on Wednesday, 27th January 2015 – Paper No 657/3(1)**

It was proposed by Mr Keery, seconded by Mr Wilson and Resolved – That the Minutes of the 656<sup>th</sup> Meeting held on Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:-

**CH**

##### **Page 14 Item 19.1 - St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena, Memorandum of Understanding**

'The Housing Executive will consider the potential of allocating land to provide 150 units comprising a mix of social and affordable housing and to proceed at a similar rate to that set out in the phasing plan in partnership with other stakeholders.'

##### **Page 15 Item 19.4 – Award of LOT Contracts for the Provision of Grounds & Tree Maintenance Services 2016**

'Mr Wilson referred to the level of the bid received from the Landscape Centre and enquired if having identified the issue were the Housing Executive at risk of receiving a legal challenge. In response, the Chief Executive advised that a robust challenge exercise had been undertaken and that legal advice had been sought regarding the abnormally low tenders. He advised that written assurances were obtained from the bidders.

The Chief Executive advised that, based on the reassurances and legal advice received, the award of contract was advanced.'

##### **Page 17 Item 22.1 – Land Disposals & Acquisitions Quarterly Update – Paper No OSP656/9(1)**

'...Members discussed the valuation levels and expressed concern that these are not reflective of current market trends and were always in line with LPS valuation figures.'

#### **6. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS**

##### **i) Presentations**

- Core Landlord Activities Benchmarking 2014-2015 – Report + Paper No 657/7(1) – Gerry Flynn, Director of Landlord Services

**ACTION**

- Journey to Excellence - Progress Update Paper Journey to Excellence - Progress Update Paper – Report + Paper No OS657/7(2) – Trevor McCartney, Director of Corporate Services
- ii) **Asset Management Commission – Proposed Publication Scheme Summary and Overview Report – Report + Paper No OS657/9(1)**

It was noted that the Department for Social Development have made a few minor changes to the report. The Director of Asset Management highlighted the changes to Members.
- iii) **Date of Next Board Meeting**

The Vice Chair informed Members that due to the Easter Holidays the Board Meeting in March would be brought forward to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015.
- iv) **Board Meeting & Away Day, 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

Members were reminded that the Board Meeting & Away Day will take place on 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016 in the Loughshore Hotel, Carrickfergus.
- v) **CIH Annual Congress in Manchester from 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

It was noted that the Vice Chair intends to attend this conference on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016. Any Member wishing to attend this conference should inform the Board Secretary as soon as possible.

**7. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

There was no official Chairman's Business.

**8. PRESENTATION****8.1 Core Landlord Activities Benchmarking 2014-2015 – Report + Paper No 657/7(1)**

The Director of Landlord Services gave a presentation to the Board on the Housemark Benchmarking results for core Landlord activities in 2014/15.

The Board noted the core activities measured:

- Rent Collection and Arrears;
- Void Works and Lettings;
- Response Repairs Service Provision;
- Tenancy Management;
- Resident Involvement; and
- Estate Services

The Director of Landlord Services outlined the performance for each of these areas and advised that the Housing Executive has achieved first

**ACTION**

quartile in 4 out of 6 areas. The Director of Landlord Services advised that the benchmark for the Repairs Service was not first quartile due to the higher average number of repairs per property. The Director of Asset Management advised that work is underway to investigate the higher number of repairs reported and referred to the changes being implemented to move to delivering a 'First Time Fix' repairs service. The Director also advised that where a high number of repairs are reported for a property, a 'health check' inspection will be completed for the property. The Director of Landlord Services advised that there is also some improvement required in relation to residents' views being listened to.

In relation to Housing Management cost per property, the Director of Landlord Services advised that the Housing Executive is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile. The Director advised that the work being undertaken through the Transformation Programme will reduce management costs from next year.

The Director of Landlord Services concluded his presentation by outlining the issues for the future – welfare reform; austerity implications; move towards digitisation; new structures and the new maintenance contract regime.

Mr McCall enquired if there is any correlation between Supporting People and rent arrears. The Director of Landlord Services undertook to investigate this.

**DLS**

The Chairman commented on the need to look at the type of properties which are expensive to maintain instead of looking at average repair costs.

Mr Lomax referred to the recent visit by housing officials from England and commented on how impressed they were with the quality of social housing and the services provided by the Housing Executive.

The Board commended the Director of Landlord Services and his team on their performance.

The Board noted the paper.

**9. FOR APPROVAL****9.1 Financial Inclusion Strategy 2016-2019 – Report + Paper No 657/8(1)**

Mr Wilson referred to the level of involvement and engagement with other agencies by the Housing Executive and enquired if better use could be made of resources.

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In response, the Director of Landlord Services advised that previous attempts to engage with tenants via 'Debt Clinics' had not been successful, consequently the organisation engaged with independent debt advisors to deliver the service.

The Vice Chair expressed his support for this form of intervention by social landlords and commented on the implications of not providing this type of support.

**Decision taken:** The Board approved the Financial Inclusion Strategy for 2016-2019 and the associated action plan.

### **9.2 Customer Support & Tenancy Sustainment Strategy 2016-2019 – Report + Paper No 657/8(2)**

**Decision taken:** The Board approved the Customer Support and Tenancy Sustainment Strategy and noted the next steps in developing Regional Action Plans.

### **9.3 Revision of the Rent Policy for NIHE – Paper No 657/8(3)**

**Decision taken:** The Board approved the revised Rent Policy objectives and the establishment of a Project Team to review the current Rent Assessment Scheme.

## **10. FOR INFORMATION**

### **10.1 Benchmarking of Scheme Costs – Paper No 657/9(2)**

The Board noted the implementation of the benchmarking of scheme costs was a recommendation from the Campbell & Tickell Report presented to the Board in October 2013.

The Director of Asset Management advised that the system developed will benchmark scheme costs and performance across regions and peer organisations. The Director advised that in the future this will enhance and improve decision making in relation to cost information and best practice.

The Board noted the progress achieved to date.

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**12. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board will be held on **Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016 at 10.00 am** in the Boardroom, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast.

The meeting ended at 12.47 pm.

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CHAIRMAN