

MINUTES OF THE 683RD MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE HELD ON FRIDAY 29 JUNE 2018 COMMENCING 10AM IN THE BOARDROOM, 2 ADELAIDE STREET, BELFAST BT2 8PB (PRIVATE MEETING AT 9.30AM)

Mr Millar (Acting Chair) welcomed everyone and requested that all present to switch their mobile devices to silent.

	<p><u>PRESENT</u> Professor P Roberts Interim Chair (via conference call) Mr K Millar (Acting Chair) Mr D Wilson Mr J McCall Alderman B Keery Councillor C Elattar</p>
	<p><u>IN ATTENDANCE</u> Mr C Bailie Chief Executive Mr P Isherwood Director of Asset Management Mrs C McFarland Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance Mr C McQuillan Director of Housing Services Mrs A Sweeney Assistant Director (Regional Services) Mr J Blease Head of Communications & Secretariat Mr A Kennedy Assistant Director (Asset Management for Asset Strategy) Mr A Barbour Assistant Director (Housing Benefit) Mr I McCrickard Assistant Director (Housing) Mrs K Smyth Secretariat Manager GEMs trainees Joined for Information Items only</p>
	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u> Mr G Lomax Interim Vice-Chair Councillor H Legge Board Member Councillor P Brett Board Member Miss S McCauley Director of Regional Services Mr S Orme Boardroom Apprentice Ms M Monaghan Boardroom Apprentice Mr R Henry Boardroom Apprentice</p>
	<p>Mr Millar (Acting Chair) confirmed the Interim Chair had participated in the Private Board Meeting via conference call, and had remained on conference call for the Board Meeting. He dealt with housekeeping issues, lunch arrangements and highlighted a change in agenda order to facilitate the Welfare Reform presentation and NIAO deadlines associated with the Annual Report and Accounts. On behalf of the Board Mr Millar conveyed the thoughts and best wishes to the Interim Chair during the difficult period ahead.</p> <p>It was noted that Professor Roberts would withdraw from the conference call immediately prior to the Welfare Reform presentation, however, he would subsequently be retrieved on the spider phone for the remainder of the Agenda.</p>

		Action
1.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
<u>ANNUAL REPORT</u>		
5.	<p><u>Annual Report and Financial Statements 2017/18 (incorporating the updated Annual Governance Statement)</u></p> <p><u>TABLED:</u> paper outlining minor amendments following the ARAC Meeting held on 25 June 2018.</p> <p>The Director of Finance, Audit and Assurance spoke to the item summarising the content and clarifying the timetable. The Accounts, once approved by the Board would receive C&AG approval on Tuesday 3 July 2018 and would be laid before the Assembly on Friday 6 July 2018. Publication was anticipated by end of August (within 8 weeks of signing). She was particularly pleased to report the previous qualification on 'Planned Maintenance' had been removed. The Director of Asset Management also endorsed the removal of the qualification, highlighting the work undertaken to achieve the outcome and the positive impact on his team. The Interim Chair extended congratulations to all concerned.</p> <p>Mr Wilson spoke on behalf of the ARAC Committee Chair and confirmed receipt of a detailed presentation and scrutiny of the Draft Annual Report and Accounts by ARAC on Monday 25 June 2018. On behalf of the ARAC Committee, he was content to recommend their approval to the Board, and took the opportunity to acknowledge the challenging timeframe and volume of work undertaken by the Finance Directorate. These sentiments were also endorsed by the Interim Chair and other Members present.</p> <p>The Interim Chair referred to the sterling work undertaken by Adele Reilly (Acting Head of Internal Audit) and wished formally to recognise her and the Internal Audit team.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> the Board approved the Draft Annual Reports and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2018.</p>	DoFAA
	At this point Mr Millar confirmed the Interim Chair would withdraw, with contact being reinitiated immediately following the Welfare Reform presentation.	

	<u>PRESENTATION</u>	
8.	<p><u>Welfare Reform Project Team Update and Potential Impact of Welfare Reform on Income Collection</u> <i>Attendance by Andrew Barbour and Ian McCrickard</i></p> <p>The Assistant Directors, Housing and Housing Benefit (Mr McCrickard and Mr Barbour) joined the meeting to present Welfare Reform Income Collection which focused on Housing Benefit Welfare changes and implementation dates. Mr Millar welcomed both officers to the meeting and invited them to commence their powerpoint presentation.</p> <p>A Board paper had also been circulated with the Agenda updating the Board on progress associated with the Welfare Reform Project, potential business impacts on income collection and the Rates Rebate Scheme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit; • Fundamental Review of Allocations delayed; • Implications for staffing model and identified savings; • Arrears; • New Build; • Waiting Times; • Advance Payments • Lack of Automation <p>To date 9250 Universal Credit claims have been made. 1830 Housing Benefit claims ended due to the migration to Universal Credit, 577 of which were Housing Executive tenants. Other issues covered included Impact on Housing Benefit workload; financial impacts and the impact on rental income collection along with the potential impact of Universal Credit on rental income collection.</p> <p>Both officers spoke in detail to their powerpoint presentation, Mr Barbour updating the Board on the impact of Welfare Reform / Universal Credit, while Mr McCrickard focused on the impact of rental income. A number of questions were forthcoming and both officers responded clarifying:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit assessment and roll out. • SSS Criteria / Benefit Cap. • Payment schedule / technical debt recorded on system. • Loss suffered due to non-payment of rates or due to mid-claims. • Private rental sector push to exclude UC claimants. • Liaison with DfC regarding arrears. • Major administrative challenge associated with staff providing additional advice/assistance with budgets, debts and 	

		<u>Action</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complex statements; the potential for tracking increased costs. • Bedroom Tax (mitigation payments). • Fear of housing charge, which can't be deducted from source. • Cashflow implications and treasury management (cash accounting / accruals system). • Debt and personal credit ratings, including poverty knock-on. • Release of NAO report criticising the whole scheme and highlighting poor performance. • Difficulties with Job Seekers Allowance Benefit. • Digitalisation of Housing Benefit applications and resources. • Arrears, potential for evictions and impact on Homelessness (much higher cost to the taxpayer). • Potential impact on relationships with tenants. • Lessons learned to date and predictions/mitigations, including planned actions to influence change. <p>Officers also assured the Board that all implications were being highlighted at DfC performance meetings.</p> <p>Members welcomed the detailed presentation updating the Board on the implications of Welfare Reform and Universal Credit and Mr Millar thanked both officers for addressing the Board with their very informative update.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> the Board (1) noted the implications of Welfare Reform, the potential impact across Housing Executive functions and the detrimental implications for rental income; and (2) requested receipt of quarterly update reports given the significance of the implications.</p> <p>Mr Barbour and Mr McCrickard withdrew from the meeting.</p>	<p>DOFAA / DHS / SEC</p>
<p><u>INTERVAL</u></p> <p>There was an interval at 11.20am. The meeting resumed at 11.30am with all previously present resuming their seats.</p> <p>Contact with the Interim Chair was reinitiated via Conference Call.</p>		

		Action
<u>COMMITTEE BUSINESS</u>		
6(a)	<p><u>TABLED PAPER: Provision of Specialist Audit Services</u></p> <p>The Director of Asset Management spoke to the paper, which had followed on from discussions at the June ARAC Committee Meetings relating to the procurement of “Specialist Audit Services”, the current contract for which was due to expire in August 2018. The paper detailed the mechanism for ensuring continuity of service via a compliant procurement route and the Director of Asset Management highlighted that while this was not a direct award, the procurement framework would allow direct awards from it.</p> <p>Members welcomed the paper, noting that the extension would take the organisation to the end of this year’s Internal Audit Plan.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> the Board approved an extension to the current contract to 13 December 2018 and, in addition, approved the award of a contract utilising a CCS framework direct award to Deloitte to 31 May 2019, thus providing continuity of service provision for the current 2018/19 audit programme.</p>	DAM / DoFAA
<u>PAPERS FOR APPROVAL</u>		
11.	<p><u>Review of the Whistleblowing Policy</u></p> <p>The Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance spoke to the paper and confirmed the Policy had also been reviewed by the ARAC Committee on 12 June 2018. She summarised the main changes which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence received in relation to whistleblowing allegations would be copied to the Head of Corporate Investigations and the Head of Governance, DfC; • Correspondence on whistleblowing allegations relating to senior staff or Board Members would be forwarded immediately to DfC for follow up and would be communicated to the Board through the Chief Executive’s office; • Estimated timescales for management action on receipt of an allegation; and • Vexatious or malicious complaints, or those that breach data protection guidelines, may be considered as misconduct and thereby subject to action under the Housing Executive’s Disciplinary Procedure. <p>The Interim Chair expressed a preference for the policy to be explicit in encouraging other channels of reporting in the first</p>	

	<p>instance, prior to embarking on the Whistleblowing procedure which should be seen as the last resort.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> the Board approved the proposed revisions to the Whistleblowing Policy in principal, subject to the first paragraph and paragraph 6.2 being more explicit about other reporting channels. The Director undertook to liaise with the Interim Chair regarding the form of words to be included.</p>	DoFAA
12.	<p><u>The NI Human Rights Commission Investigation into Traveller Accommodation - Housing Executive Action Plan</u></p> <p>The Assistant Director spoke to the report which outlined relevant background information following publication of the final report from the Human Rights Commissioner into its recent investigation into Traveller Accommodation in Northern Ireland. The paper set out the context of the report and summarised the 45 recommendations, 26 of which fell to the Housing Executive, along with a detailed Action Plan to deliver on those recommendations.</p> <p>The Assistant Director elaborated on priority actions, timeframes, stakeholder engagement to date and ongoing discussions with the NIHRC in relation to delivering on the 5 recommendations that required further clarification. She also elaborated on key issues and considerations, succession planning, budget and other resource implications.</p> <p>The Interim Chair enquired how officers were ensuring that the transition to Universal Credit (UC) was integrated to this particular issue. The Chief Executive responded, indicating it was his understanding that the Landlord has to be registered with DfC, although some issues would remain in terms of linking the UC payment to a particular standard of accommodation. The Interim Chair suggested that officers liaise with the Human Rights Commissioner on the implications associated with UC for this particular client group.</p> <p>Discussion ensued regarding the Equality Legislation and organisational awareness in not disadvantaging everyone else in order to advantage a specific group. The Interim Chair also highlighted the clear definition as contained in the Rural Needs Act.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> the Board approved the content of the paper and the Action Plan set out in Appendix 1, implementation of which was subject to suitable funding being obtained from the Department for Communities.</p>	<p>DRS</p> <p>DRS</p>

	<u>INFORMATION PAPERS</u>	
	With the exception of items 14 and 15, all other Information Items were noted enbloc.	
15.	<p><u>Stock Transfer: Removal of Doury Road Estate from the SSVT Programme</u></p> <p>The Director of Asset Management spoke briefly to the paper informing the Board of the removal of Doury Road Estate from the Small Scale Voluntary Transfer (SSTV) Programme.</p> <p>The Interim Chair discussed some issues around the BSC project and the Director confirmed that this was being taken forward by DfC.</p> <p><u>PAPER NOTED.</u></p>	
16.	<p><u>Demolitions Monitor Update</u></p> <p><u>PAPER NOTED.</u></p>	DAM
17.	<p><u>Update on Compliance and Health and Safety</u></p> <p><u>PAPER NOTED.</u></p>	DAM

20.	<u>Community Safety Strategy Action Plan Update</u> <u>PAPER NOTED.</u>	DHS
21.	<u>Tenancy Fraud Update</u> <u>PAPER NOTED.</u>	DHS
<u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u>		
26.	There was no other business raised.	
<u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u>		
<p>The 684th Board Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive will be held on Wednesday 29 August 2018 in the Boardroom, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast (<i>Private Meeting commencing 9.30am</i>).</p> <p>The Belfast Regional Visit would immediately follow this meeting.</p>		

There being no further business Mr Millar conveyed thoughts and prayers to the Interim Chair for the days ahead. The Interim Chair also expressed his appreciation to Mr Millar for chairing the meeting and the meeting concluded at 12.30pm.

INTERIM CHAIR