

## Executive Briefing Introduction

**“Executive Briefing” summarises the business of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s Board at its meeting on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2009 at 9.30am in the Boardroom, Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8PB.**

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**Members Present:** Mr Brian Rowntree  
Mr Ciaran Brolly  
Cllr Brendan Curran  
Mr Alistair Joynes  
Cllr Eamonn O’Neill  
Cllr Jenny Palmer  
Cllr Jim Speers  
Dr Monica Wilson

**Apologies:** Mrs Anne Henderson  
Mr Brendan Mackin

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## **GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **1.0 Business Plan Monitor**

The Housing Executive's Business Plan Monitor for April to December 2008 showed that the majority of targets were either fully or substantially met. However, overall performance on physical targets has been adversely affected by the level of funding.

### **2.0 Risk Management 2008/09**

The Board noted the position in relation to the Housing Executive's Risk Register for the third quarter of 2008/09.

- 2.1 The Risk Register identifies the corporate risks and the action planned to manage those risks. The Risk Register will be kept under review to ensure that new risks are captured within the framework as they emerge. Detailed risk responses have been developed and are included in the new Risk Register. The Board noted that the housing budget is impacting on the Housing Executive's capacity to deliver the Corporate and Business Plans.

## **STRATEGIES AND POLICIES**

### **3.0 Community Cohesion Unit – Progress Report for 2008**

The Board noted progress across the five key themes of the Housing Executive's Good Relations Strategy.

- 3.1 The promotion of good relations is a key objective of the Housing Executive's Good Relations Strategy. The Strategy contributes to safer, more stable neighbourhoods and promotes a more inclusive society, recognising that trust and safety within communities is a key component to change.
- 3.2 The Board noted progress against each of the following five themes:

a) Residential Segregation/Integration

The Housing Executive continues to provide Shared Future housing in all its forms. A formal evaluation of the initial pilot Shared Future new build scheme at Carran Crescent, Enniskillen is due to be undertaken. This will highlight lessons learned and best practice for future schemes. A second pilot scheme is due to go on site in spring 2009.

Further potential Shared Future schemes have been screened in Banbridge, Ballycastle, Lisburn, Magherafelt, Newcastle, Crossgar and Londonderry and four new schemes have been identified at:

- 1) Sion Mills Phase 3
- 2) Causeway Meadows, Lisburn
- 3) Downpatrick Road, Crossgar
- 4) Gowanvale, Banbridge

The Housing Executive also aims to develop opportunities for Shared Future housing schemes within large scale urban regeneration sites in order to contribute towards shared space and a shared city environment.

The Housing Executive has also developed a community based approach to support local communities in living in a Shared Neighbourhood where diversity is welcomed. Five schemes have been identified through the Shared Neighbourhood Programme:

- 1) Ballynafeigh, Belfast
- 2) Tonagh/Knockmore, Lisburn
- 3) Springfarm, Antrim
- 4) Gortview/Killybrack Close, Omagh
- 5) Lissizes, Banbridge

Briefings on the Shared Neighbourhood Programme have been completed with all relevant District Councils and the programme has been warmly welcomed. A further five areas will be launched in early 2009.

b) Race Relations

Work on promoting good relations continues in line with the Housing Executive's Race Relations Policy and Action Plan which was introduced in 2005. The main policy themes focus on:

- Mainstreaming Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) issues in policy development
- Racial harassment and intimidation
- Promoting BME social inclusion
- Community participation and development
- Migrant workers

c) Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols

Work on murals over the last twelve months has made Housing Executive estates more welcoming and helped communities explore and celebrate their culture. Estates at the following locations have benefited: Kilcooley, Lisburn, Newtownards, Ballymena, Mosside, Portadown, West Belfast and Shankill.

The summer of 2008 saw the lowest level of flags in over eight years. The summer also experienced a greater improvement in the management of bonfire displays. The use of the first beacon in Woodvale, Belfast was regarded as a great success and other estates are expected to consider beacons for next year. PSNI figures for a number of "difficult" estates show a dramatic reduction in the level of anti social behaviour during the summer of 2008.

d) Interface Areas

The Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Unit, as a member of the Interface Working Group chaired by the Community Relations Council, has developed a process for the potential removal/ re-imaging of interface areas in Belfast. Two Belfast interface communities are currently taking part in a pilot organised jointly by the Housing Executive and the Northern Ireland Office.

An evaluation report of the pilot projects by the Interface Working Group has recently been passed to Assembly Ministers, political parties, government departments and community groups for consideration.

e) Communities in Transition

Discussions have been ongoing to ensure a joined up approach in the delivery of services to communities at risk of community tension. The Housing Executive has met with the Community Relations Council, Belfast City Council, Community Foundation Northern Ireland and the Voluntary and Community Unit at DSD. A new joint tension monitoring initiative will commence in Belfast during 2009.

#### **4.0 Northern Ireland Housing Market – Review and Perspectives 2009-2012**

4.1 The Board considered the thirteenth annual publication of the “Northern Ireland Housing Market – Review and Perspectives”. The report is published each year by the Housing Executive in its role as the regional strategic housing authority. The purpose of the Review is to provide a comprehensive insight into all sectors of the housing market, highlighting the factors which will influence the development of these sectors in the coming three year period, as well as setting out the key housing issues to be addressed.

4.2 The dominant themes in this year’s report are the effect of the financial crisis and the deepening economic recession, both of which have brought about a sharp downturn in the housing market. These factors combined in Northern Ireland with the challenging pressures on the budget for social housing.

4.3 The main themes in the report are:

- a) Strategic context – dealing with the recent pre-budget report in November 2008 and the budgetary provision for social housing in Northern Ireland;
- b) Owner-occupied sector – highlighting the reduction in fewer social housing dwellings being sold;

- c) Private rented sector – highlighting that this sector has the highest rate of unfitness and disrepair across all tenures;
  - d) Main trends in social housing – looking at the ongoing need for adequate funding for social housing to meet growing demand
- 4.4 The Review highlights the need for investment in social housing as a way to stimulate the housing market and the wider economy. It is proposed to launch the Review at the Housing Executive’s Housing Forum being held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2009 in Belfast. Prior to the launch, consultation will have taken place with a number of key stakeholders, including DSD, Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) and Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association.

## **5.0 House Sales Incorporating Equity Sharing Scheme**

- 5.1 In September 2008 the Board was advised of the Minister’s intention, under the New Housing Agenda, to extend the House Sales Scheme to incorporate equity sharing. The Department for Social Development completed its consultation on the scheme in October 2008. An amendment was made to the level of discount available under the House Sales scheme. Applicants will now receive 70% of the eligible discount when purchasing 50% of the equity, and the remaining 30% when they purchase 100% of the equity.
- 5.2 An Implementation Plan has been developed by the Housing Executive. A Tenants Guide has been drafted which will shortly be available on the Housing Executive’s website. The scheme will be effective for applications received on or after 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2009.

## **6.0 A Strategy for Houses in Multiple Occupation**

The Board approved the Housing Executive’s revised Strategy for Houses in Multiple Occupation.

- 6.1 In 2000 the Housing Executive published a Strategy for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Northern Ireland. Due to significant changes in the sector a review of the Strategy was



implemented. Consultation took place in early 2008 and a draft Strategy has now been developed.

6.2 The 5 broad objectives of the Strategy and the Housing Executive's proposals for each objective are:

- 1) To ensure that HMO properties are brought up to satisfactory physical standards, prioritising those properties where risk to occupants is perceived to be greatest

The Housing Executive's primary concern is for the health, safety and wellbeing of HMO occupants. The Housing Executive's proposals include the enforcement of the appropriate standards with regard to fire safety, physical conditions and HMO management. They also aim to ensure compliance with the HMO Statutory Registration Scheme which is being systematically rolled out across Northern Ireland.

- 2) To provide appropriate information and advice on the HMO sector to tenants and prospective tenants and ensure that they are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities

The Housing Executive intends to intensify its campaign, through a range of measures, including working with universities and students and promoting the NIstudentpad website. The Housing Executive will also be working more closely with landlords with regard to more active tenant involvement.

- 3) To ensure that HMOs are well managed

The Housing Executive proposes to seek changes to the HMO Management Regulations introduced in 1993 to include more wide ranging management standards. These changes include fines for non compliance to standards and the use of HMO Registration Fees to offer awareness seminars for landlords. The development of an accredited course for HMO landlords has also proposed.

4) To ensure that the adverse effects of concentrations of HMOs are reduced

Concentrations of HMOs have shown to result in increases in antisocial behaviour, crime and vandalism and loss of neighbourhood and community spirit. The Housing Executive proposes to seek more effective legislation to ensure more landlord involvement. It is also currently consulting on the Special Control Provisions element within the HMO Registration Scheme to ensure landlords take more practical steps to deal with the adverse effects of HMOs.

5) To support local regeneration strategies through the provision of good quality HMO accommodation in targeted locations

The Housing Executive will continue to support such initiatives as:

- a) Town Centre Living Initiative Areas
- b) Living Over The Shops (LOTS)
- c) Rural Priority Areas
- d) Grants Urban Priority Areas
- e) Group Repair Terraces
- f) Belfast Arterial Routes

## 7.0 Adaptations Performance Update

The Board noted an update on the delivery of housing adaptations for people with disabilities.

### 7.1 Occupational Therapy (OT) Referrals

	<b>Dec 2007</b>	<b>Dec 2008</b>
Number of public sector cases pending assessment	542	129

The overall demand for OT services indicates a downward trend. The number of cases from all sources (including NIHE) awaiting assessment at September 2008 was 4,317 representing a decrease of 3,028 cases on the figure of 7,345 at March 2007.

## 7.2 Housing Executive Performance

### 7.2.1 Volumes

	<b>Dec 2008</b>	<b>Dec 2007</b>
Extension Starts	125	133
Heating Starts	92	468
Lift Installations	164	147
Urgent & Other Showers	889	1244

### 7.2.2 Timescales

#### Extensions

	<b>Dec 2008</b>	<b>Dec 2007</b>
34 week target	42%	50%
50 week target	76%	72%

Extension referrals have increased from 233 in April 2008 to 291 in December 2008.

#### Heating

Performance levels have decreased slightly between December 2008 and the same period in 2007, possibly due to budget constraints.

	<b>Dec 2008</b>	<b>Dec 2007</b>
Urgent installations – 12 week target	67%	78%
Standard Plus – 35 week target	71%	98%
Standard – 52 week target	95%	100%

#### Lifts

	<b>Dec 2008</b>	<b>Dec 2007</b>
Within 12 week target	67%	86%
Within 22 week target	90%	98%

## Shower Installation

With regard to **shower installations** performance, 100% of urgent and other showers have been delivered within target.

### 7.2.3 New Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) Performance Measures

The new DFG standards achieved at December 2008 were:

<b>Target</b>	<b>Base line</b>	<b>Prev Qtr</b>	<b>Current Perf</b>
To carry out 90% preliminary inspections within 10 days	30%	81%	85%
To issue 70% of schedules of work within 20 days	25%	79%	73%
To issue 70% of DFG approvals within 40 days	20%	58%	42%

At the end of December 2008 expenditure on DFGs was £10,468k, compared to £10,173 in the same period in 2007.

### 7.2.4 Other Developments

Eight PODs have been completed and a further 3 are being manufactured. An evaluation of the pilot project will be completed by the end of February 2009.

The Housing Executive continues to explore bath to shower replacements without requiring an OT assessment, dependant on the development of a standardised solution.

## **8.0 Report on the 7<sup>th</sup> Consultative Forum on Equality**

The Board noted a report on the Housing Executive's Seventh Consultative Forum on Equality.

- 8.1 The Consultative Forum on Equality provides a framework for consultation with a wide range of equality and voluntary organisations and offers an invaluable touchstone in the process of policy development with representatives from the voluntary sector, community sector, trade unions and other public bodies.

Forum members retained the following key issues on Steering Group agenda:

- a) Community Planning, Lifetime Opportunities & Sustainable Development and the promotion of equality of opportunity, and the role of equality groups;
- b) Community cohesion;
- c) A draft Sexual Orientation Policy Statement;
- d) Carers;
- e) The Housing Executive's Disability Action Plan;
- f) Black & Minority Ethnic and Migrant Worker issues.

8.2 The Forum received presentations on a number of current issues: "Next Generation Equality Schemes", "Housing Executive Corporate & Business Plans" and "Children and Young People's Policy".

## **9.0 Draft 5 Year Social Housing Development Programme for 2009/10 to 2013/14**

9.1 The Board approved the Housing Executive's draft 5 Year Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) for 2009/10 - 2013/14, against the revised Strategic Guidelines and the Programme for Government targets. The Board also noted progress on the delivery of the 2008/09 Social Housing Development Programme.

9.2 The DSD had previously set an annual starts target of 1,500 social housing units each year, with a target of 5,250 over the period 2008/09 to 2010/11. These targets include:

- 1,500 for 2008/09
- 1,750 for 2009/10
- 2,000 for 2010/11

### Delivery of the 2008/09 Programme

9.3 To date Housing Associations have started work on 57 schemes/ 511 social housing units, which represents 34% of the 2008/09 target. Work has been completed on 98 schemes/

818 social housing units to date. It is anticipated that starts will be secured on a total of 1,100 social housing units by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, based on current available funding. The shortfall of 400 units is achievable if additional funding was made available through the February Monitoring Round. If funding is not available, the shortfall will receive approval for an early on-site date in 2009/10.

9.4 There are a number of potential constraints on the effective delivery of the programme, which include:

- An increase in regulatory activity;
- The creation of four Procurement Groups for Housing Associations;
- The delivery performance of Housing Associations;
- Continuing pressure on the Supporting People budget;
- A reduction in the level of HAG with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009
- The nature and content of Economic Appraisals
- Greater justification with regard to Value for Money on valuations due to increased market volatility.

#### Draft 2009/10 – 2013/14 Programme

9.5 The scale of the draft programme for 2009/10 – 2013/14 is set out in the table below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Gross Target</b>	<b>Actual Programme</b>
2009/10	1,550	1,801
2010/11	2,392	2,774
2011/12	2,685	2,755
2012/13	2,951	2,800
2013/14	2,965	2,847
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,600</b>	<b>11,508</b>

9.6 While targets for the years beyond 2010/11 have not yet been set by DSD, it is assumed that targets will need to increase for the later years if the proposed overall target of 10,000 new units over 5 years is to be achieved. As the programme becomes more robust, the level of over-programming can be reviewed.

The overall social housing budget for 2009/10 remains the subject of discussion but in the current economic climate, it is not yet possible to submit a single budget figure for the 2009/10 programme.

### Strategic Guidelines Compliance

- 9.7 Each year the Housing Executive uses the Strategic Guidelines to formulate a new 5 year Social Housing Development Programme. A major fundamental review was carried out in late 2008 and consultation findings currently being analysed will be reflected in next year's programme formulation.

### 9.8 Next Steps

The Department for Social Development continues to work towards securing full funding to achieve the proposed starts of 1,750 new social housing units during 2009/10. The Draft SHDP for 2009/10 – 2013/14 will now be forwarded to the Minister for approval, following which it will be published on the Housing Executive's website, possibly by mid-February.

## **10.0 Planning & Feasibility Estate Based Studies Social Housing Development Programme**

The Board noted the progress and current position of the Housing Executive in carrying out its programme of strategic assessments with regard to estate based studies, in line with the Social Housing Development Programme.

- 10.1 Within a number of Housing Executive estates there is a significant amount of quality open space, some of which is brownfield and some of which is ill defined and lacking meaningful use, which can often attract anti social behaviour. The development of such open space areas can positively benefit an estate, as well as offering additional social and affordable housing units. In addition, the Housing Executive has agreed a protocol with the Planning Service where quality design can be achieved without detriment to existing residents. The strategic approach to the development of open space allows for a phased development for the medium to long term future.



- 10.2 The Housing Executive has 23 current area based studies in its Planning & Feasibility Regeneration Programme. The studies range from small estates with limited potential, such as Ligoniel in Belfast to other estates which offer extensive regeneration opportunities and challenges such as Galliagh in Londonderry and Rathcoole in Newtownabbey. At present 10 outline Planning approvals have been obtained; a further 7 applications are awaiting a Planning decision and 3 site applications are due to be submitted between January and March 2009. The potential development of a site application is considered in line with Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 8 “Open Space, Sport & Outdoor Recreation”.
- 10.3 In addition to the estate based studies, some open space lands within housing areas are leased to or owned by District Councils. The Housing Executive co-ordinates planning applications with Councils who have expressed an interest in disposing of land for social housing. Studies are currently being carried out in the following Council areas:
- a) Ards Borough Council
  - b) North Down Borough Council
  - c) Ballymoney Borough Council
  - d) Down District Council

### **11.0 Amendments to the Housing Selection Scheme in Line with the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008**

The Board approved amendments to the Housing Selection Scheme in line with new legislation which contains provisions which apply to housing legislation in respect of homelessness.

- 11.1 The new legislation will remedy the incompatibility of certain statutory provisions dealing with homelessness with the European Convention on Human Rights, and will ensure that preferential access to social housing is not conveyed to a person who has applied as homeless by virtue of a person who is not eligible for assistance, is subject to immigration control and who has no leave to enter or remain in the UK. The Department for Social Development will now be asked to formally approve the amendments to the Scheme.



## **12.0 Evaluation of Research Programme 2007/08**

The Board noted the Housing Executive's housing research projects undertaken in 2007/08.

- 12.1 The Housing Research Programme continues to provide a valuable source of information which makes a significant contribution to the Housing Executive's strategic and operational activities. Its findings are also extensively used by external organisations, the voluntary sector, academic institutions, other Government Departments and statutory bodies.
- 12.2 Under the 1981 Housing Order the Housing Executive has a statutory responsibility to "regularly examine housing conditions and need" and may "conduct or promote research into any matter relating to any of its functions".

The Programme is sub-divided into 3 sections:

### **12.3 Strategic Research**

The final report on the 2006 House Condition Survey was launched in September 2008.

During 2007/08 a number of other important projects in the strategic research programme were undertaken:

- i) Strategic review of housing and housing related information needs of older people
- ii) Analysis of the need and demand for Retirement Villages in their various forms
- iii) Second Homes: Impact on the Market (Phase 2)

### **12.4 Customer Research**

A number of customer research programmes were carried out which provide key information to the Housing Executive. These included: Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) Exit Polls; Neighbourhood Renewal Surveys, Grants Customer Surveys and the Staff Survey (previously Staff Attitude Survey).

## 12.5 Technical Research

The main activity on technical research was undertaken on collaborative projects with the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and other partner organisations. Two of these projects are now complete:

- i) Reducing waste on housing construction sites
- ii) Improving drainage provision for sustainable development

12.6 The Housing Executive continues to produce a bi-annual Housing Research Bulletin highlighting current Housing Executive research work and other relevant work being undertaken by or on behalf of government departments in Northern Ireland by universities and other bodies.

## 13.0 **Home Loans Scheme – Mortgage Interest Rate**

The Board approved the current rates of interest on the Housing Executive's Home Loans Scheme.

13.1 In January 1982 the Department of the Environment, now the Department for Social Development, stipulated that the rate of interest to be applied to new and existing loans under the Housing Executive's Home Loans Scheme would be the higher of either the Standard National Rate or the Local Average Rate. It was further stipulated that the Executive should vary its rate of interest on mortgages whenever a change in either or both of these rates requires it. With the exception of Homesteading cases, the "True Rate" of interest charged for loans issued in respect of applications received on or after 1 October 1987 remains capped at 14%.

13.2 The Board approved that, for the purpose of the Home Loans Scheme, the Local Average Rate should be declared at 9.70% for the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.

## 14.0 **Proposed Amendments to Procurement Standing Orders**

The Board approved the revised procurement control limits in the Housing Executive's Standing Orders. The new limits are to allow greater opportunities to small/medium enterprises and to social economic enterprises.

## **15.0 Valuation of Housing Stock for Year End Financial Statements**

The Board noted the work being done by the Housing Executive in providing a valuation of NIHE housing stock for application in the 2008/09 financial statements.

- 15.1 In the Northern Ireland Audit Office report entitled “Report on those charged with Governance 2007/08”, concern was raised on the method used by the Housing Executive in the valuation of housing stock for accounting purposes. In response the Housing Executive will provide a revised housing stock valuation for inclusion in the 2008/09 Annual Report and Accounts.
- 15.2 Traditionally Housing Executive stock has been revalued each year. This valuation amount is based on the average of actual sales of properties within stock types, number of stock and the average discount allowable under the “Right to Buy” policy. However, due to the significant decrease in the level of house sales as a result of the current economic climate, there is insufficient data to support the existing method of valuation.
- 15.3 In consultation with the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Housing Executive has proposed a method of valuation which is subject to formal audit examination by the NIAO. The revised method will determine a representative value of the Housing Executive’s entire stock, based on clusters of housing stock sharing common characteristics. This will then be adjusted to reflect social housing use. The housing stock valuations are part of a comprehensive timetable to meet the reporting arrangements for the Annual Report and Accounts.

## **16.0 Northern Ireland Assembly Questions**

The Board noted details of recent housing related Assembly Questions.

- 16.1 During the period 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> December 2008, 65 Assembly Questions were tabled for response by the Minister for Social Development. Of these 39 were housing related.

## 17.0 NIHE Scheme Design/Heating Scheme Approvals

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Work Content</b>	<b>Start Date</b>
<b><u>North East Area</u></b> Greenisland, Carrickfergus	Multi Element Improvements to 14 NIHE flats and External Cyclical Maintenance to 2 sold flats	Jul 2009
Craigyhill, Larne	Structural repairs to roofs and external walls, kitchen replacement and in-curtilage work to 34 dwellings	Sept 2009
<b><u>North East Area</u></b> One-Off Emergency Dwellings 2009/10	Heating replacement to 40 dwellings (30 oil full heating & 10 gas full heating)	Apr 2009
<b><u>West Area</u></b> One-Off Emergency Dwellings 2008/09	Heating replacement to 40 dwellings (30 oil full heating & 10 gas full heating)	Apr 2009
Hill View/ Churchtown Park Heat Replacement	Heating replacement to 65 dwellings (65 full oil fired back boilers or solid fuel room-heaters to oil)	Mar 2009
<b><u>West Area</u></b> Long Tower Court/ Durrow Park Heat Replacement	Heating replacement to 62 dwellings (10 full oil fired back boilers or solid fuel room-heaters to gas & 52 full E7 to gas)	Mar 2009
<b><u>South East Area</u></b> Movilla Phase 2	Heating replacement to 88 dwellings – 21 solid fuel to gas full heating, 19 solid fuel to gas conversion, 44 E7 to gas full heating & 4 E7 to gas conversion	Jan 2009