

Response to:
FOI_069
July 2023

Upper Long Streets RDA

- 1. All minutes/notes of meetings NIHE held between Caral Ni Chuilin MLA and Grainia Long in relation to the Upper Long Streets RDA**

Minutes are attached of meeting which took place on 7 February 2023.

Please note that names of individuals have been redacted as this is personal information and exempt from disclosure under FOIA Section 40(2) to avoid contravening data protection principle (a) in Article 5 of the UK GDPR.

- 2. Minutes of all meetings of the higher level Project Board of Upper Long Streets RDA, Belfast, of which Grainia Long is a member**

We hold no information meeting the description this request. There is no such forum as a “higher level project board” of which Grainia is a member.

Housing Executive

EVENT DETAILS	
Name of Event / Meeting:	Political Meeting – Carál Ní Chuilín (SF)
Date and time of Meeting:	7 th Feb 2023 4.15pm
List of External Participants:	Carál Ní Chuilín (CNC) [REDACTED]
List of Internal Participants:	Grainia Long (GL) [REDACTED] Frances Gallagher (FG) [REDACTED]

Minutes of Meeting:

- GL welcomed all to the meeting.
- [REDACTED] outlined the qualifying criteria for Home Loss payments, advising that claimants must be in lawful occupation of the dwelling for a period of one year prior to the date of displacement, as an owner occupier or a tenant. Additionally tenants may be entitled to a Statutory Disturbance Payment if they are lawfully occupying the property at the date of displacement and owner occupiers may qualify for a “common law domestic disturbance” payment.
- CNC stated that in Advance Purchase acquisitions, it would be helpful if Home Loss and Disturbance payments could be released to owner occupiers at the point of completion together with purchase monies as this would be helpful in securing finance for move-on accommodation.
- [REDACTED] confirmed that Home Loss and Disturbance are statutory payments and as such claimants must submit a written claim and all such claims must be validated prior to release of monies. However, the Housing Executive would endeavour to process such claims expediently.
- GL stated that whilst claims were being processed, the Housing Executive could offer a letter of comfort to lenders in the interim.
- CNC raised a query on the use of management transfer status for tenants.
- GL stated that as the Housing Executive had not undertaken large scale clearances for some time the organisation is reviewing the framework for same, including the appropriate tenure for residents subject to requisition and mechanisms to re-house people in terms of the best levers and policies that could be used.
- CNC raised issues connected to flats in the Lenadoon and the re-development of Upper Long Street, Belfast.
- GL stated that the Housing Executive would give clarity on these issues and that every re-development is approached in accordance with all of the relevant rules and procedures.
- CNC asked when the Housing Executive intended to provide more information on vesting etc.
- [REDACTED] advised that the Housing Executive was close to completing work on a Schedule of Interests which would identify all the legal interests in land or property within the Redevelopment Area

Housing Executive

boundary and this would facilitate an application for a Vesting Order to the Department for Communities (DfC).

- ■ confirmed that there are 189 privately owned residential properties and 2 disused commercial properties within the red line boundary and the majority of title was held by leasehold necessitating investigative work through various channels to identify and record the freehold title, and superior leasehold title in some cases. A sample taken from the Schedule of Interests has been submitted to DfC, seeking confirmation on the presentation format and if agreed, this approach will be applied to the full application. ■ continued, that post approval by DfC, the Housing Executive will serve a Notice of Application to Vest on all persons identified as having a legal interest and will also publish a Notice in the press to initiate the vesting process. Residents and all other interested parties will be given an opportunity to object to our vesting proposals at this stage. If formal objections are submitted and accepted by DfC, this could delay the process, and therefore it is difficult to accurately predict an operative date for a Vesting Order. However, if DfC approval is forthcoming and there are no objections, the earliest we could expect to obtain an Vesting Order would be July / August 2023.
- CNC advised that she was aware of a number of cases recently whereby private landlords had served 4 week eviction notices on their tenants and were moving into the properties themselves or moving family members, in order to claim Home Loss compensation and be rehoused in the new development.
- ■ stated that a number of incidents had been reported to the Housing Executive and the practice is undesirable. However, if a Vesting Order is obtained in a timely manner, it is very unlikely that those claimants would be in a position to satisfy the qualifying criteria for the payment of Home Loss compensation.
- CNC stated that she was advising residents to get legal advice, as appropriate.
- ■ gave an example of a local woman having to move into a hostel following the end of her private lease.
- GL stated that this was unacceptable and symptomatic of what is currently happening in the private rental market (lack of security of tenure).
- CNC enquired if the Housing Executive was waiting until vesting happened before undertaking information sessions and noted that separate sessions were needed for Private Landlords; tenants of private landlords; tenants of NIHE and Owner Occupiers
- GL referenced a drop-in session which took place in March 2022.
- ■ stated that the Housing Executive would want to get out there as soon as possible and that they would take advice from CNC on the best way to do this. We are happy to do this on a tenure by tenure basis.
- CNC stated that she was not asking for a public meeting but that the Housing Executive should engage with the Upper Long Streets Residents Committee.
- ■ confirmed that the Housing Executive had been in contact with the Committee and will be meeting with them again very soon. He also stated that the current DLO industrial action was having an impact on COT repairs and slowing clearance.
- ■ also highlighted some of the issues that the industrial action is causing at present.
- CNC discussed the impact of rising housing prices in North Belfast, specifically in relation to some young families caught in a negative equity trap.
- GL highlighted a slight increase in the number of houses being demolished, from 274 to 277 with regard to an anomaly identified within the red line boundary.
- CNC enquired if there was any consideration for older residents who wanted to stay in the New Lodge area.
- ■ stated that Newington (in partnership with Apex Housing) had been nominated to take forward the new development and would be appointing a Design Team once a Vesting Order has

HousingExecutive

been obtained. The Design Team will facilitate a number of Design workshops to engage with residents and to inform the design brief and agree an appropriate housing mix.

- CNC highlighted the needs of tenant families who would need adaptations made to their properties. She also raised a query about the use of bungalows.
- GL stated that bungalows are not effective as they are low density but that there are other design solutions which may be appropriate and can be considered at the design stage.
- CNC asked how the re-development will work in practical terms.
- GL stated that this would be based around how we clear homes and which homes become vacant. ■ also stated that this work was being carried out as quickly as possible.
- CNC asked how long a private landlord needs to give their tenant before serving an eviction notice.
- FG stated that this was detailed in the Private Tenancies order and that she will pass the relevant information on to CNC.
- CNC thanked all for the meeting.