

Housing Executive

MINUTES OF THE 703RD MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL 2020 COMMENCING AT 10AM VIA CONFERENCE CALL (PRIVATE SESSION HELD AT 9.45AM)

All present were requested to switch their mobile devices to silent.

	<p><u>PRESENT</u></p> <p>Professor P Roberts Chair Mr J McMullan Vice Chair (<i>present in Boardroom</i>) Mr D Wilson Board Member Mr J McCall Board Member Mr K Millar Board Member Mr C Welch Board Member Councillor C Elattar Board Member Alderman A Grehan Board Member Alderman A Bresland Board Member Councillor M Ruane Board Member</p>
	<p><u>IN ATTENDANCE</u></p> <p>Mr C Bailie Chief Executive (<i>present in Boardroom</i>) Mrs C McFarland Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance Mr C McQuillan Director of Housing Services Mr D Moore Director of Corporate Services Mr P Isherwood Director of Asset Management Ms S McCauley Director of Regional Services Mrs M Canning Head of Communications (Acting) Mrs C Loughran Boardroom Apprentice Mrs K Smyth Secretariat Manager (<i>present in Boardroom</i>)</p>
	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Ms Emily Morgan, CPANI Mentee</p>
1.	<p><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></p> <p>The Chair, Professor Roberts, welcomed everyone to the meeting, those physically present in the Boardroom and adhering to social distancing measures and those participating remotely due to COVID-19 circumstances. A roll call was expedited and confirmed by the Secretariat Manager.</p> <p>The Chair noted one apology from his Mentee, due to examination studies, and advised that Ms Morgan hoped to observe the May monthly meeting.</p>

		<u>Action</u>
2.	<p><u>Declarations of Interests</u></p> <p>No declarations were received and all present were reminded of best practice in relation to the handling of any conflicts of interest.</p> <p>The ability to withdraw from the Conference Call and re-dial in was highlighted, should a conflict arise.</p>	
<u>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING / BROUGHT FORWARD</u>		
3.	<p><u>Draft Minutes - the 702nd Meeting of the Housing Executive Board held on Wednesday 25 March 2020</u></p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> on the proposal of Mr McCall, seconded by Mr Wilson, that the above Minutes be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.</p>	CHAIR
4.	<p><u>Matters Arising / Brought Forward from Minutes</u></p> <p>There were no queries raised by Members. The Chair remarked that the paper was self-explanatory and also that the Forward Work Plan had been suspended by the Board in March due to the evolving COVID-19 circumstances.</p> <p><u>PAPER NOTED.</u></p>	
<u>CHAIR'S BUSINESS</u>		
5.	<p><u>Chair's Business (Verbal Report)</u></p> <p>The Chair recognised that his usual visits / walkabouts had been suspended and that he would continue to actively participate in remote communications during the COVID-19 situation.</p> <p>(a) <u>Chief Executive - Retirement Date Extended</u></p> <p>(b) <u>Open letters/communications of appreciation from Chair (COVID-19)</u></p> <p>(c) <u>NIHE Rent Increase 2020/21- Letter from Paul Price, DfC</u></p> <p>(d) <u>New Deputy Permanent Secretary, DfC:</u></p> <p>(e) <u>Press Releases - Minister Deirdre Hargey, MLA</u></p> <p>(f) <u>Board Appointments</u></p>	

(g)	<u>Recruitment Exercise for ARAC & DLO Independent Committee Members</u>	
(h)	<u>Annual ARAC & DLO Committee Self-Assessment Exercises</u>	
(i)	<u>Environmental Working Group</u>	
(j)	<u>New Build Task and Finish Group</u>	
(k)	<u>Other items of Business</u>	
	<u>NOTED.</u>	

CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS

6.	<p><u>PAPER - Chief Executive’s Emerging Issues</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive spoke in detail to his paper, its purpose being to ensure that the Board was well informed about any emerging issues which may impact on the work of the Housing Executive.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> the Board welcomed and noted the contents of the Chief Executive’s Emerging Issues paper and expressed appreciation to the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team for their continued efforts during the crisis situation.</p>	
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COVID-19 UPDATE

7.	<p><u>PAPER - COVID-19 Spotlight including next steps</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive spoke in detail to the paper updating the Board on the Housing Executive’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The paper outlined the statutory responsibilities, priorities, incidences of COVID-19 within the Housing Executive, risks faced, extensive planning and preparation measures under consideration related to a potential second wave, budget and resource implications and next steps. A separate Board paper dealing with the impact of COVID-19 in relation to Homelessness Services was also included on the agenda.</p> <p>The Chair invited each of the Directors to briefly elaborate on their respective business areas and, on behalf of the Board, recorded his appreciation to the Head of Risk and Governance for the comprehensive paper.</p> <p>Discussion ensued and officers responded to enquires from Members related to the future risk of surges and associated</p>	
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	<p>business models in terms of what we have learned to date (Mr McCall); and video/teleconferencing capacity for future meetings (Mr McMullan).</p> <p>Mr McCall also highlighted a further concern related to digital democracy, and drew attention to the need to also be attentive to tenants, elected representatives and also Tenants Groups/Forums, to ensure their interests were also addressed from a digital perspective.</p> <p>During discussion the Chair drew attention to the research exercise being undertaken which would also encapsulate the impact, both positives and negative, on previous and new business models (i.e. commuting to and from work). The Chair added that information had been released from the Equality Commission yesterday and endorsed the need to consider the disproportionate number of people who do not have ready access to services which others take for granted.</p> <p>The Vice Chair highlighted that more than one of the pilots in the Provider Innovation Fund had dealt with aimed to enable vulnerable tenants to be able to access social media as a way to ensure social support, and he suggested that the Housing Executive would benefit from some public relations messaging around improvements in digital capacity. The Head of Communications undertook to action accordingly.</p> <p>During discussion the Director of Housing Services recognised the gap and also elaborated on an on-site project being rolled out which involved the distribution of approximately 300 tablet devices to support digital capacity within the community.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> the Board noted the content of the COVID-19 Spotlight paper which discussed the measures taken to date, including next steps.</p>	<p>HoC</p> <p>CX</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>PAPER - Homelessness - COVID-19 Response</u></p> <p>The Director of Housing Services spoke in detail to the paper, its purpose being to update the Board on actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with reference to homelessness services, focusing on the work completed, main achievements and budget implications to date during the crisis situation.</p> <p>It was recognised that people experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable in our communities, particularly exposed to contracting COVID-19. Many of these individuals often have multiple chronic conditions and may live in shared accommodation, or on the streets, being particularly vulnerable to high rates of infection and mortality without urgent intervention.</p>	

	<p>Protecting those who are homeless or rough sleeping presents one of the most difficult challenges of all.</p> <p>The paper focused on:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surge plan and contingency arrangements; • Liaison with key stakeholders; • Operation of homeless functions; • Addressing temporary accommodation requirements; • Rough Sleeping Assistance; • Facilitating social distancing, Self Isolation and reducing community transmission risks; • Movement to “Test-Triage-Cohort-Care” Model and development of specific facility for positive cases; • Housing Executive Staff; • Key outcomes to date; • Budget Implications. <p>During presentation of the paper, the Director of Housing Services was pleased to report that 150 temporarily vacant Housing Executive properties would be furnished to allow their use by people currently in temporary accommodation. He also highlighted the chaotic lifestyles of some clients, and the difficulties being experienced to manage a small number of individuals in temporary accommodation. He was particularly pleased with the recognition from the press and Minister for Communities in terms of the extraordinary efforts and Housing Executive response during the crisis.</p> <p>Members welcomed the paper and the Chair also acknowledged the support received to date.</p> <p>A lengthy discussion took place and the Director of Housing Services responded to enquiries from Alderman Grehan, elaborating on homeless predictions and planned measures for the winter months; and the Vice Chair on the elements of usage of non-standard access and the monitoring of episodes of rough sleeping.</p> <p>During discussion it was also confirmed that none of the hostels had experienced a COVID-19 outbreak to date, and it was further suggested that the Head of Communications should action some public relations around this, it being described by the Chair as exemplary and a case study in best practice.</p> <p>Mr McCall drew particular attention to section 5 in the paper (liaison with key stakeholders) and remarked that the extent to which Departmental and multi-agency partnership arrangements are reflected should also be fully utilised in terms of the provision</p>	HoC
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	<p>and supply of PPE, and particularly under the aegis of the SP Programme.</p> <p>With reference to ‘Persons From Abroad’, the Director of Housing Services added that as raised by the Board in March, communications were underway in respect of seeking access to any additional measures of public funding (and legislative amendment) from the Department for Communities (DfC) in relation to the emergency action underway to help people from abroad who were extremely vulnerable, rough sleeping and had no recourse to public funds.</p> <p>The Chair remarked on the invaluable success and ‘value for money’ associated with rough sleeping assistance and management in Northern Ireland by the Housing Executive and suggested that achievements should be shared with colleagues in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.</p> <p>The undernoted compliment from a tenant was also earmarked for formal recording in the minute of the meeting, quotation as follows:-</p> <p><i>“I recently received a phone call from the NIHE (I didn't catch his name) to ask if I had all the phone numbers I needed and to ask how I was. He addressed me by name and not as the tenant. If you know who this was, please thank him for me. I have been self-isolating for 8 weeks and had a bad week when I got the phone-call. To know that the NIHE take the time to ring and check on their tenants means a lot. I have developed a new appreciation for the NIHE and thank you for all that you do and have done. I hope you and all the NIHE staff are keeping safe and well.”</i></p> <p>In conclusion, the Chair remarked he was grateful to all concerned for the fantastic work to date, and recorded appreciation on behalf of the Board. He also suggested that the Head of Communications may wish to note the above submission as a testimony for the 50 Year Anniversary Celebrations.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> the Board -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • noted the actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with reference to homelessness services; the collaborative and proactive approach undertaken to offer protection to homeless individuals, and the associated financial implications; • with reference to the provision and supply of PPE, the Board collectively felt that anything other than the UK wide co-operation and leadership in terms of procurement and distribution was unacceptable, and 	<p>HoC</p> <p>HoC</p> <p>DHS</p> <p>CX / CHAIR</p>
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	<p>noted that the Chair and Chief Executive would liaise to co-ordinate an appropriate response to the Department for Communities building on the good progress already made during the crisis, and asking that they interject with the Department of Health accordingly.</p>	
<u>GOVERNANCE</u>		
9.	<p><u>PAPER - Corporate Risk Register - Further Updates (COVID-19)</u></p> <p><u>PAPER APPROVED.</u></p>	
10.	<p><u>PAPER - Draft Annual Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31 March 2020</u></p> <p><u>PAPER APPROVED.</u></p>	
<u>FINANCE</u>		
11.	<p><u>PAPER - Monthly Finance Report as at 31 March 2020</u></p> <p><u>PAPER APPROVED.</u></p>	
	<p>The Secretariat Manager withdrew from the meeting at this point, the next item relating to the Stage Two of Corporate Services Structure, and which encompassed the Secretariat Team.</p>	
<u>APPROVAL PAPERS</u>		
12.	<p><u>PAPER - Review of Corporate Services Stage Two</u></p> <p><u>PAPER APPROVED.</u></p>	
	<p>The Secretariat Manager returned to the Meeting during discussion of the next item, 11.44pm.</p>	
13.	<p><u>PAPER - Draft 2020/21 One Year Corporate Business Plan</u></p> <p><u>PAPER APPROVED.</u></p>	
14.	<p><u>PAPER - Landscape Centre Trading as Idverde - Consideration of Uplifts and Overpayments</u></p> <p><u>PAPER APPROVED.</u></p>	

15.	<u>PAPER - Approval to Implement Procurement Guidance Note (PGN) 01/20 to Housing Executive Contracts</u> <u>PAPER APPROVED.</u>	
16.	<u>PAPER - PGN 01/20 Supplier Relief Due to COVID-19 - “Overhead Retainer Payments for Tier 1 Response Repairs and Heating Critical Services</u> <u>PAPER APPROVED.</u>	
17.	<u>PAPER - CT011 Heating Services Tender - Discontinuation Litigation</u> <u>PAPER APPROVED.</u>	
<u>INFORMATION PAPERS</u>		
	The undernoted four Information papers were noted en bloc by the Board. Comments submitted by Members in advance of the meeting are also outlined therein.	
18.	<u>Monthly Paper - Performance against the 2019/20 Business Plan at the year-end (March 2020)</u> <u>PAPER NOTED.</u>	
19.	<u>Corporate Services year-end Report as at 31 March 2020 (Quarterly Paper)</u> <u>PAPER NOTED.</u>	
20.	<u>Compliance/Health & Safety Assurance Report</u> The information paper provided the Board with a monthly update on the Compliance/Health and Safety, with a view to providing an assurance that any outstanding issues identified were being addressed by the Compliance, Health & Safety Department, in conjunction with the relevant Directorates. Mr Millar referred to the Fire Assessment section and expressed some concern that one item still remained and was reflected as intolerable. The Director of Housing Services responded indicating that local mediation had resolved the situation and the item could be removed. He added that it would have already been removed had it not been for COVID-19 circumstances. Mr Welch reiterated his previous concerns in relation to oil boilers, a number of which remained outstanding. He commented that he	DAM

	<p>felt COVID-19 was creeping in as an explanation, although could not be accorded to the pre-March matter. The Director of Asset Management elaborated on the 'No Access' procedure, which Mr Welch felt left the organisation slightly exposed.</p> <p><u>NOTED:</u> with reference to the concerns expressed above by Mr Welch, officers undertook to consider a different approach to be rolled out in relation to oil boilers.</p> <p><u>PAPER NOTED.</u></p>	DAM
21.	<p><u>PAPERS - Weekly COVID-19 Board Updates from the Chief Executive (from 27 March to 17 April) - Four Updates</u></p> <p>The above papers had been circulated electronically to Board Members.</p> <p><u>PAPERS NOTED.</u></p>	
<u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u>		
22.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>The undernoted two matters were raised.</p> <p>(a) Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) Sounding Board Meeting</p> <p>(b) Progress with an Active Maintenance Programme</p>	
<u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u>		
<p>The 704th Board Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 27 May 2020 at 10am and would take place remotely via Conference Call due to COVID-19 circumstances.</p>		

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance, those present in the room and those participating via speaker phone. He reiterated his appreciation to everyone was putting their best efforts into ensuring that our tenants and other service users continue to receive excellent treatment during this crisis. He hoped that everyone and their families continued to keep safe during the current emergency and, on behalf of the Board, conveyed his appreciation again for all inputs.

The meeting concluded at 12.30pm.

CHAIR