

Title of Report:	Correspondence
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	7 January 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council operates as one effective and efficient corporate unit with a common purpose and culture
Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	N/A

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Paragraph 2.0 NILGA £730 + VAT per participant Plus <i>optional</i> Accreditation £590 +VAT
Included in Current Year Estimates	Yes
Capital/Revenue	N/A
Code	Paragraph 2.0 3101-62507
Staffing Costs	Within roles

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES/NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to present correspondence for Members' consideration.

1.2 The following correspondence has been received:

2.0 **Alison Allen, Chief Executive, NILGA, NILGA Leadership Development Programme for Councillors 2025, dated 12 December 2024** (copy attached)

2.1 **Extract**

*NILGA is delivering CPD Standards, **8 Module Accredited Leadership Development Programme** for elected members, which aims to develop the practical skills necessary for a strategic understanding of the context within which councillors work (people, place and systems) and the capabilities they need, using relevant models and concepts to help them improve their strategic leadership approach in a local political environment. The Leadership Programme will commence on the 31st January 2025 and will run each month up until the Autumn 2025. NILGA seeks nominations based on your own determinations, which we ask you seek at the earliest possible full council meeting.*

2.2 **Costing estimate**

*Individual participant cost will be subject to the overall number of the cohort nominated for the Leadership Programme 2023-24; based on a cohort of 20, we can provide an indicative cost of **£730 +VAT**.*

*There will be an opportunity for those Councillors who are interested in and committed to achieving CPD accreditation from the CPD Standards Office. This will involve additional costs to the figure provided above - indicative costs at this stage are a further **£590 +VAT**. Those who wish to register and commit to CPD accreditation will have a deadline within which to do so (typically, at the end of the second module).*

3.0 Minerals and Petroleum Branch, Department for the Economy, dated 6 December 2024

Extract

- 3.1 *Dear Stakeholder, The Department previously contacted you about the consultation on onshore petroleum licensing policy in Northern Ireland (details available [here](#)).*
- 3.2 *On 05 December 2024 the Executive endorsed Minister Murphy's final policy position to introduce a temporary moratorium and eventual legislative ban on exploration and production of all forms of onshore oil and gas. A moratorium on the acceptance and processing of petroleum licence applications is now in place and legislation will be brought forward in the coming months to enact a full ban.*
- 3.3 The departmental press release is [available here](#).

4.0 Susie McCullough, Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Nappy Collection Scheme, dated 13 December 2024 (copy attached)

4.1 Extract

At the November Council meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

“That this Council notes the 70% recycling target set out in the Climate Change Act 2022 and that the current household recycling average is 50.7%. Further notes the aims and intentions around the consultation on “Rethinking our resources: measures for climate action and a circular economy in NI” includes the reduction in grey bin capacity by either volume of bin or three weekly collections. Further notes that nappy collection scheme was not referred to in Rethinking our resources: measures for climate action and a circular economy in NI” despite around 4% of residual waste being made up of disposable nappies and other absorbent hygiene products. Further notes with concern the impact reduced grey bin capacity will have on those households disposing of nappies and/or other absorbent hygiene products as well as the amount of recyclable materials such products contain.

This Council writes to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs expressing its view that there is a need for a nappy collection scheme in Northern Ireland in order to meet recycling targets and to support households if grey bin capacity is reduced as a result of any future Departmental strategy and, further, that this Council would

be happy to engage with the Department on how to best deliver such a scheme. And that a copy of this motion is sent to other Councils in Northern Ireland to encourage them to write to the Minister on similar terms.”

I would be most grateful if your Council could consider writing to DAERA in support of Ards and North Down Borough Council’s call for the Department to work towards the establishment of a disposable nappy collection and recycling service in Northern Ireland.

5.0 Marie Ward, Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Gender Based Violence Against Women, dated 16 December 2024 (copy attached)

5.1 Extract

Re: Notice of Motion – Gender Based Violence Against Women

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 2 December 2024, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

“That this Council notes the growing concern regarding the epidemic of gender-based violence against women. This concern has been heightened by recent sexual assaults in Derry and the tragic deaths of five women in the past seven weeks in the North.

In response to this, this Council writes to the Justice Minister and the Justice Department, urging them to expand the categories of "significant persons" when applying for a Non-Molestation Order, to include individuals who were in a significant relationship but did not cohabit. This would align with the provisions in the UK, where similar protections are offered, and with the "Safety Order" provisions in the Republic of Ireland.

Additionally, this Council calls on other councils in the North to support this motion, thereby advocating for the extension of similar protections to women in the North, ensuring they are afforded the same legal safeguards as those in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

That Council write to the Lord Chief Justice asking for a review of how male offenders who have offended against women are given bail”.

I have been asked to write to each of the Councils requesting support for this motion and would ask that you give this matter serious consideration. I look forward to your response.

6.0 Kelly Cameron, Secretary, Northern Ireland Housing Council, dated 17 December 2024 (copy minutes attached)

6.1 Enclosed Housing Council Minutes, meeting held 12th September 2024, 10th October 2024, 14th November 2024.

7.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Council consider the correspondence.

David Jackson
Chief Executive
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Cloonavin
66 Portstewart Road
Coleraine
BT52 1EY

11th December 2024

Dear David

Re: NILGA Leadership Development Programme for Elected Member Development 2025

As you know, NILGA coordinates an all-council Regional Programme of Elected Member Development annually, complementing your Council's specific training, designed to provide the local government sector's elected members with a co-ordinated toolkit of learning, aligned to the political skills framework. This builds on the NILGA delivered - nationally accredited Councillor Development Charter and Charter Plus initiatives, has been co-designed by councils' elected member development groups, councils' member services and human resource officials, through the NILGA Elected Member Development Network.

As part of this, accredited provision is available to elected members related to Leadership.

NILGA is delivering CPD Standards, **8 Module Accredited Leadership Development Programme** for elected members, which aims to develop the practical skills necessary for a strategic understanding of the context within which councillors work (people, place and systems) and the capabilities they need, using relevant models and concepts to help them improve their strategic leadership approach in a local political environment. The Leadership Programme will commence on the 31st January 2025 and will run each month up until the Autumn 2025. NILGA seeks nominations based on your own determinations, which we ask you seek at the earliest possible full council meeting.

Module	Title	Time	Date	Venue
Module 1	Programme Induction The Roles of Councillors	1-4pm	Friday 31 st January 2025	In-person, venue tbc
Module 2	Leadership of Your Local Area	tba	tba February 2025	Online / Digital
Module 3	Leadership of Your Local Community	tba	tba March 2025	Online / Digital
Module 4	Leadership with Partners – We are all in this together?	tba	tba April 2025	Online / Digital
Module 5	Leadership of Place	tba	tba May 2025	Online / Digital
Module 6	Leading the Improvement of Outcomes	tba	tba June 2025	Online / Digital
Module 7	Leading the Improvement of Efficiency and Service Delivery	tba	tba July 2025	Online / Digital
Module 8	Developing your Future Leadership Role	tba	tba August 2025	In-person, Venue tbc

Please note, there are costs per participant associated with the Programme and I have included an indicative costs model to assist in your consideration of participation, based upon previous delivery.

Thanking you in anticipation of your continued positive approach and nominations for participation on the accredited Provision. Please feel free to contact my colleague Fiona Douglas (f.douglas@nilga.org) or myself if you or a senior colleague wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,



Alison Allen
Chief Executive

CC. Pauline Donaghy and Sinéad Duggan

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB

Tel: 028 9079 8972 email: office@nilga.org web: www.nilga.org twitter: @NI_LGA

NILGA Leadership Development Programme for Councillors 2025

What is this programme about?

The NILGA Leadership Development Programme provides a unique training and development experience for councillors in Northern Ireland to help them address the challenges of their role.

The programme is based on a tested and highly accessible model, which helps councillors to improve their understanding of:

- *Context*: how to adapt their leadership styles and practices to the context and challenges of their own place, people and systems.
- *Theory*: what knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to be effective, based on rigorous conceptual and theoretical frameworks.
- *Practice*: how to increase their personal resilience and improve their practical response to challenges.

The programme therefore enhances councillors' strategic leadership and decision-making skills, making more effective their Council role, community champion activities and 'personal brand'.

How will this programme benefit me?

The programme will help you to develop the practical skills necessary to be a more effective councillor, to highlight what roles you currently play and should look to play in the future, and to overcome the major challenges and barriers you face in playing these roles.

You will have the chance to catch up with the latest thinking on local government leadership and to develop new approaches to your work as a councillor.

The Programme is deliberately ambitious – it aims to enable you to take a strategic approach to identifying, balancing and addressing the needs in your local area and making more effective use of the assets of local residents, community groups, local business, your political party (if you belong to one) and the Council.

The programme is also designed to help you to deal successfully with the operational problems faced by your constituents. Case studies and discussions with visiting speakers who have directly relevant experience of the issues will introduce new approaches, so that you are assisted to think and act differently and have more impact in tackling the problems you face.

Finally, the programme is CPD-accredited, so upon completion you will accumulate CPD credits to demonstrate your achievement.

Programme of workshops

Modules
Module 1: Programme Induction The Role of the Councillor
Module 2: Leadership of Your Area
Module 3: Leadership of Your Community
Module 4: Leadership with Partners – We’re All in This Together
Module 5: Leadership of Place
Module 6: Leading the Improvement of Outcomes
Module 7: Leading the Improvement of Efficiency and Service Delivery
Module 8: Developing Your Future Leadership Role

During the eight modules, we will be exploring the following knowledge and skill sets – and you will have a chance to identify your own strengths and ‘learning opportunities’ in relation to each of these:

- Local leadership (All Modules)
- Political understanding (Modules 1, 2 and 5)
- Partnership working (Modules 3 ,4 and 5)
- Effective communication for influence (Module 3 and 7)
- Scrutiny and challenge (Module 2 and 6)
- Regulating and monitoring (Module 6)
- Effective use of digital technologies and social media (Module 7)
- Personal resilience (Module 8)

What commitment will the programme entail from me?

You will be expected to attend eight 3-hour workshops over 8 months, beginning in January 2025, preparation is required for each workshop (reading a short article or blog and preparing the answer to some questions relevant to the session). You will then gain CPD credits for your

attendance. In addition, you will get 12 extra CPD credits if you make a short presentation in one of the final workshops, focusing on how you are improving your leadership in line with the lessons you have learnt from the programme.

What other participants have gained

NILGA believes this programme brings major benefits for all participants. And previous participants agree here are some comments from councillors who participated in previous programmes:

“The programme has been brilliant from start to finish, I have learnt a lot from it and from that learning I can actually make better decisions and get more involved in my role as a Councillor as I no longer shy away from the big decisions.”

“The use of data sources and the approach of identifying key skills in people where I do not have the strength in such. Also, the continual developing and learning in myself has been a great asset in both council and my professional role.”

“I found the course informative, and it helped me to understand my role as a Councillor and leader in my community. It was also really good to hear experiences and tips from Councillors in other areas.”

“... pushed me to make me even more self-aware ..., especially of my leadership style and how best to utilise this in different groups and situations. Particularly the power of influence and not control!”

“As a newly elected councillor I am still very much learning in the role. Content in the Programme helped me gain a better understanding of process and how to achieve outcomes.”

Costing Estimate

The cost for the overall Programme, based on 2023-24 delivery and current forecasted requirements, is approximately £14,600 +VAT. Individual participant cost will be subject to the overall number of the cohort nominated for the Leadership Programme 2023-24; based on a cohort of 20, we can provide an indicative cost of £730 +VAT.

There will be an opportunity for those Councillors who are interested in and committed to achieving CPD accreditation from the CPD Standards Office. This will involve additional costs to the figure provided above - indicative costs at this stage are a further £590 +VAT. Those who wish to register and commit to CPD accreditation will have a deadline within which to do so (typically, at the end of the second module).

13 December 2024

Sent by email only

Dear Chief Executive,

At the November Council meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

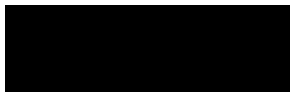
“That this Council notes the 70% recycling target set out in the Climate Change Act 2022 and that the current household recycling average is 50.7%. Further notes the aims and intentions around the consultation on “Rethinking our resources: measures for climate action and a circular economy in NI” includes the reduction in grey bin capacity by either volume of bin or three weekly collections. Further notes that nappy collection scheme was not referred to in Rethinking our resources: measures for climate action and a circular economy in NI” despite around 4% of residual waste being made up of disposable nappies and other absorbent hygiene products. Further notes with concern the impact reduced grey bin capacity will have on those households disposing of nappies and/or other absorbent hygiene products as well as the amount of recyclable materials such products contain.

This Council writes to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs expressing its view that there is a need for a nappy collection scheme in Northern Ireland in order to meet recycling targets and to support households if grey bin capacity is reduced as a result of any future Departmental strategy and, further, that this Council would be happy to engage with the Department on how to best deliver such a scheme. And that a copy of this motion is sent to other Councils in Northern Ireland to encourage them to write to the Minister on similar terms.”

I would be most grateful if your Council could consider writing to DAERA in support of Ards and North Down Borough Council’s call for the Department to work towards the establishment of a disposable nappy collection and recycling service in Northern Ireland.

Many thanks for your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely



Susie McCullough
Chief Executive

Marie Ward
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

Our ref: C/188/2024

16 December 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Re: Notice of Motion – Gender Based Violence Against Women

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 2 December 2024, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

"That this Council notes the growing concern regarding the epidemic of gender-based violence against women. This concern has been heightened by recent sexual assaults in Derry and the tragic deaths of five women in the past seven weeks in the North.

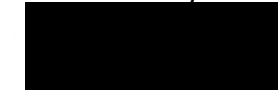
In response to this, this Council writes to the Justice Minister and the Justice Department, urging them to expand the categories of "significant persons" when applying for a Non-Molestation Order, to include individuals who were in a significant relationship but did not cohabit. This would align with the provisions in the UK, where similar protections are offered, and with the "Safety Order" provisions in the Republic of Ireland.

Additionally, this Council calls on other councils in the North to support this motion, thereby advocating for the extension of similar protections to women in the North, ensuring they are afforded the same legal safeguards as those in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

That Council write to the Lord Chief Justice asking for a review of how male offenders who have offended against women are given bail".

I have been asked to write to each of the Councils requesting support for this motion and would ask that you give this matter serious consideration. I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully



Marie Ward
Chief Executive

**Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office**
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

**Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office**
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

0330 137 4000 (Council)
council@nmandd.org
www.newrymournedown.org

**Ag freastal ar an Dún
agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down
and South Armagh**



Minutes of the 509th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 12th September 2024 at 10.30 in the Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast

Present:

Cllr Mark Cooper
 Cllr Aaron Skinner
 Cllr Mary O’Dowd

Ald Keith Kerrigan
 Ald Amanda Grehan
 Cllr Deirdre Varsani

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
 Mid-East Antrim Borough Council
 Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
 Derry & Strabane District Council
 Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
 Mid Ulster District Council

Virtual:

Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald
 Ald Stephen McIlveen

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
 Ards & North Down Borough Council

In Attendance – NIHE:

Grainia Long
 Gillian Greer
 Maria McLaughlin
 Kelly Cameron

Chief Executive
 Assistant Director, Housing Benefit
 Executive Assistant Chair & CX’s Office
 Secretary, Housing Council

Apologies:

Cllr Sean McGlinchey
 Cllr Aoife Finnegan

Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
 Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting, in particular to Councillor Deirdre Varsani, Mid Ulster District Council to her first meeting since her appointment.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Cllr Varsani advised that her son works for a Housing Association.</p>	
3.	<p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 8th August 2024</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Mary O’Dowd and Seconded by Ald Amanda Grehan. The Minutes were approved.</p>	

4.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>4.1 Meeting with the CEO of NIFHA</p> <p>It was noted that arrangements will be made to invite the CEO of NIFHA to a future meeting.</p> <p>As discussed at the 'In Committee' session, the Chair advised that a previous Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Housing Council and Housing associations had been drawn up and would be circulated and revised at a future meeting.</p> <p>4.2 Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>As discussed at the 'In Committee' session arrangements would be made for the new Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons to attend a future meeting.</p> <p>The Chair added that it was discussed at the 'In-Committee' session and Members are to forward questions they wish put the Minister to the Secretary.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	<p>KC</p> <p>KC</p> <p>AI/KC</p>
5.0	<p>VERBAL UPDATE ON EMERGING ISSUES & STRATEGIC ITEMS</p> <p>Grainia Long gave Members an update on emerging issues and strategic items as follows.</p> <p>5.1 Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most</p> <p>It was noted there is a strong focus, in the document, on housing practice and that cross cutting is a priority. The PfG will deliver a housing supply strategy and it is critical that they are committed to delivering this. The Housing Executive has been feeding into this and G Long would provide an update on this if required.</p> <p>G Long added that she would put a presentation together on what the Programme for Government might mean for housing.</p> <p>5.2 Impact of Draft 2024/25 Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQIA response - the proposed budget cuts pose significant risk for strategic programmes and services and will lead directly to cuts in service delivery, as early as October 2024. • Homelessness - insufficient budget to meet statutory obligations; wraparound support and prevention will be greatly reduced. The increasing numbers of people awarded refugee status must be supported. • Waiting lists - will be longer and stays in expensive temporary accommodation will increase further (already at critical levels). 	<p>KC</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHDP - only able to deliver up to 600 new homes, largest projected reduction in a generation; when housing need is at its most acute. • Construction sector - reduction in new build will take approx. £80-£90m out of the sector, causing 'shock,' which will take time to recover from. • Affordable Warmth Scheme – reduced by £6.8m will mean 53% fewer households (1,465) being able to access this scheme. • Supporting People – indicative £80.7m allocation will prevent full roll out of the SP Strategy and the Providers Innovation Fund. • Fundamental Review of Allocations – will face uncertainty as there is no budget set aside to implement any recommendations. • Staff costs – reduction in allocation will negatively impact NIHE's ability to provide homelessness services, specifically in the Housing Solutions Team. (NIHE out-of-hours service will also be adversely affected). • Emergency planning – no funding for contingency and emergency planning i.e. extreme weather events experienced recently. 	
5.3	<p>Emerging Issues by Exception:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress against Business Plan objectives on track; 80 out of 87 KPIs green, 7 amber. Main underperformance is in relation to disabled adaptations for NIHE stock; continue to struggle to secure contractors. • Busy summer; several major issues to deal with, including rise in number of race hate incidents- currently at 143. Coordinated approach in response, across the organisation and with statutory and other partners. • Housing Solutions Task and Finish Group (aimed at increasing our supply of temporary accommodation) continues to progress; more than 80 additional units added to portfolio since April. First use of HMOs in August, further coming on stream in September. Notice periods from Mears continues to be less than 28 in majority of cases. • Annual round of Housing Investment Plan meetings underway, across all 11 Councils; setting out scale and nature of our investment locally. • Prioritisation of new build schemes following additional £20m for new build social housing; engagement with housing association sector, developers etc. • Major programme of work on leasehold to identify and provide solutions for leaseholders unable to afford major works • Progress across the DLO in relation to reducing backlog in COTs and repairs, reduction in relet times: voids at 0.44%. 	
5.4	<p>Draft Ten Year Mission and Corporate Strategy – Pre-consultation stage</p> <p>G Long advised that the Board has reviewed the document, which is now at pre-consultation stage, and which will be submitted to the Minister on Monday 16 September 2024. She felt it would be useful for the Housing Council to see it also and undertook to check with the Minister's office that the Housing Council can see the document while he is reviewing it. The document would be circulated once permission has been received.</p>	

<p>5.5</p> <p>5.6</p>	<p>Discussion took place on the following:</p> <p>Race Hate – why do MEARS give short notice to leave temporary accommodation. G Long advised this is due to MEARS not getting enough notice from the Home Office, but also not passing the information to the Housing Executive as soon as they receive it from the Home Office. GL confirmed that the Housing Executive had asked that the Home Office notify the Housing Executive regarding notice, but this was declined as their contract is with MEARS. GL offered to provide more detail if required.</p> <p>Ald. Grehan asked why MEARS only provide 28 days notice but private landlords allow three months. G Long advised this is due to legalities and that the Home Office wouldn't pay for an additional three months.</p> <p>SHDP – Further discussion took place on the SHDP requirement this year of 400 homes (increased to 600) and how easy it would be to allocate. G Long advised that strategic guidelines would be applied (only on programme if based on housing need). She added that those homes, on last year's programme, that were delayed due to planning approval etc would be included in the 600 homes this year.</p> <p>Cllr O'Dowd requested confirmation where the 600 homes would be. G Long advised she would ask her Director of Strategic Housing Authority to follow this up and respond.</p> <p>In response to Ald. Grehan's question regarding the 20% affordable and social housing in developments, G Long advised she was concerned that Housing Association schemes won't be commissioned as developers are not making money. She added that she meets with Housing Associations quarterly and has already had this conversation and is making a strong case to DfC and then to DoF. Meetings have also taken place with CITB regarding developers. Discussion also took place on commuted sums.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the model used in Finland and keen to look at this model and explore this more in-depth.</p> <p>G Long agreed that it would be useful to present to the Housing Council on leasehold.</p> <p>Agreed: Presentation to be emailed to all Members.</p>	<p>KC</p> <p>KC</p> <p>KC</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>PRESENTATION ON UPDATE ON THE MOVE TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT (UC)</p> <p>Gillian Greer, Assistant Director Housing Benefit from the Housing Executive gave an update on the move to Universal Credit. Her presentation focussed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background to UC Universal Credit replaces six existing legacy benefits with one and is aimed at people of working age between 18 and state pension. 	

The system went live in NI for new claims in September 2017 and some claimants have moved naturally to UC, due to a change in their circumstances.

- **Move to UC**

On 16 October, the move to UC went live for customers in receipt of Tax Credits only and the final stage of UC implementation, known as Move to UC involves the managed migration of those people who remain in receipt of legacy benefits. Current planning assumption is that approximately 14,000 Housing Benefit customers will receive a migration letter in this financial year

- **Planned Rollout**

From May 2024 the planned rollout will begin with Tax Credits with Housing Benefit followed by Tax Credits with Income Support, ESA (Income Related) with Child Tax Credits, Pension Age Tax Credits and Tax Credits with JSA (Income-Based).

- **Next Steps**

Customers will receive a Migration Notice from DfC and they will have three months from the date of the Migration Notice to claim Universal Credit. At that point in time the Housing Benefit team will receive what is known as a “Stop Notice” from DfC Move to UC Team.

If they change their mind within one month of their Housing Benefit claim stopping, their UC claim will be backdated, and they will remain eligible for Transitional Protection. All customers will receive an additional two weeks rent as part of the stopping HB process, this payment excludes rates.

- **Impact on Housing Executive**

In total, approximately 54,000 HB customers will move to UC. Housing Benefit caseload will reduce to approximately 75,000 customers. Approximately 36,000 Housing Executive tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit will Move to UC.

- **Delivery Readiness**

Processes have been in place since September 2017 with a new team in place to oversee the Move to UC Programme. The Housing Executive is confident that the new structure will work well and enable them to effectively cope with the additional volume of Stop Notices they will receive.

- **Considerations**

This is a collaborative piece of work that DfC will take the lead on, in partnership with Housing Benefit and any communications must be led by DfC. This is their programme, and risks would be introduced if the Housing Executive ran their own communications campaign. There are processes in place to deal with legacy benefit customers who do not apply within their migration window.

	<p>Discussion took place as follows:</p> <p>Cllr O’Dowd asked about pension tax credit for pensioners with HB and those with disabilities and mental health issues. The Assistant Director, Housing Benefit advised that this is a bespoke customer base and relates to pensioners who are still working. In total there are 110,000 people moving to UC and, of that 1,000 are pensioners who are still working and will be managed through the process. Those with disabilities and mental health issues, who are in receipt of support allowance will have support through their journey to UC.</p> <p>The Assistant Director, Housing Benefit undertook to clarify the following questions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Universal Credit is to be paid directly to the Housing Executive as the landlord • Discretionary support – is there a timeline for paying back the financial support <p>The Chair thanked G Greer for her presentation.</p>	G Greer
7.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>7.1 Visit to Sunningdale, Belfast</p> <p>Members noted that a visit to the newbuild scheme in Sunningdale, Belfast has been arranged for 24th September. Members were encouraged to attend the visit and see at first-hand the design, standards and net zero of the scheme.</p> <p>7.2 Meadowbrook, Craigavon</p> <p>Cllr O’Dowd confirmed there were issues with the Contractor on the Meadowbrook site. It was noted that there are only 1 or 2 contractors who are skilled to do this retrofit work in Northern Ireland. J Blease undertook to follow this up.</p> <p>7.3 Infrastructure Issues</p> <p>Cllr Varsani added that there are two completed projects in her area, Dungannon, which can’t open due to infrastructure issues particularly in relation to the public sewer system.</p> <p>In response to Cllr Varsani’s request that all Councils should do a scoping exercise to put forward land, the Chair believes an exercise is being done at present by all agencies.</p> <p>The Chair advised that NI Water, as well as the DfI Minister, should be invited back to a meeting to give an update on where they are now. It was agreed that all Councils should be asked for their plans and, when all plans are received, a letter should be issued to the DfI Minister with an update.</p>	JB KC

<p>7.4</p> <p>7.5</p> <p>7.6</p>	<p>Members received the following responses, for their information:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair Grants • Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland • Areas of ERDF and 400 programme retrofit • Promoting the NI Energy Advice Service • Housing Council response to EQIA budget 2024/25 <p>NIFHA Conference in Lough Erne Enniskillen from 17th-18th October 2024</p> <p>The Chair advised that, if any Member wishes to attend the NIFHA conference, they should contact the Secretary.</p> <p>In-Committee</p> <p>The Chair asked Officers to leave the meeting as he wanted to reconvene the In-Committee Session (12.18 pm)</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 10th October at 10.30 am in the Craigavon Civic Centre.</p>	

Meeting ended 12.31pm



Minutes of the 510th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 10th October 2024 at 10.30 in Craigavon Civic Centre, Craigavon

Present:

Ald Amanda Grehan
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Cllr Aoife Finnegan
Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald
Cllr Deirdre Varsani

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (Chair)
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Mid Ulster District Council

Virtual:

Cllr Mark Cooper
Ald Stephen McIlveen
Heloise Brown
Keiran Devlin

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Department for Communities
Department for Communities

In Attendance – NIHE:

Catherine McFarland
John Gowdy
Jenny Williamson
Kelly Cameron

Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance, NIHE
Senior Planning & Performance Manager, NIHE
Business Manager
Secretary, Housing Council

Apologies:

Cllr Sean McGlinchey
David Polley

Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
Department for Communities

1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.</p> <p>Several Members felt that in the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, the stand-in Chair should have been appointed by Members at the Meeting and not nominated before the meeting.</p>	
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2.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations.</p>	
=3.	<p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 12th September 2024</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Mary O’Dowd and Seconded by Cllr Deirdre Varsani.</p> <p>The Minutes were approved.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>4.1 Meeting with the CEO of NIFHA</p> <p>It was noted that Seamus Leheny, Chief Executive of NIFHA had accepted an invitation to give a presentation at the November meeting.</p> <p>4.2 Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>Members undertook to provide further questions they wish to be put forward to the Minister for Communities and this will be discussed at the next ‘In Committee’ session, prior to setting up a meeting.</p> <p>4.3 Housing Executive Board Membership</p> <p>It was noted that the Housing Council had still not received application forms for the three vacancies from the Housing Council to the NIHE Board. Several Members expressed their disappointed at the delay in this process.</p> <p>Heloise Brown confirmed that it is the intention following the competition process the appointments should be made by 1st January 2025.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	
5	<p>Department for Communities Housing Top Issues</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	
6.	<p>Presentation on the Housing Executive’s Budget 2024/25</p> <p>Catherine McFarland, the Housing Executive’s Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance gave a detailed update on the Housing Executive’s Budget 2024/25.</p> <p>An overview was given on the Housing Executive’s Landlord Services and Regional Services on the key responsibilities, funding model and positions. Members also noted the key financial challenges for the current year and year 2025/2026.</p>	

	<p>Members acknowledged the continuing financial challenges year on year and the detrimental impact it has on maintaining and investing in stock and services provided.</p> <p>Several Members referred to the lack of support for some of the most challenging and vulnerable people with mental health problems causing anti social behaviour and in-turn that leads to higher levels of homelessness and asked what is the level of discretion, Housing Executive staff have in dealing with those with extreme complex needs.</p> <p>Cllr Fitzgerald sought confirmation on the opening hours of Housing Executive local offices.</p> <p>It was agreed that an update on will be given to a future Meeting and to address supporting services that are not always targeting the most vulnerable. The Housing Council as a body could address and consider ways to improve the situation.</p> <p>Cllr Varsani referred to managing the budget in different ways and suggested investing in derelict properties, particularly as there is pressure on the water and sewage systems where there are difficulties in newbuild schemes due to the lack of infrastructure.</p> <p>Assurance was given that all options are explored in order to increase housing supply. The DfC confirmed that the Housing Supply Strategy will be presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly in the nearer future.</p> <p>Members supported the regeneration to town centre living by investing in properties over shops and drive forward the economy.</p> <p>The DfC confirmed that a report had been carried out on Living over the shops (LOTS scheme) and its findings showed that this was an ineffective way of resources and not value for money, to bring these properties back into use.</p> <p>Cllr Cooper referred to the JANS Modular Housing Review is a body with key members of local council, politicians and the Housing Executive on the capability and capacity to provide Modular housing solutions within the affordable / social sector, and beyond. Cllr Cooper undertook to provide further details for Members attendance.</p> <p>Referring to the length of time for a response letter from the British Government in relation to the 2024/25 budget, the Secretary undertook to follow up on a response.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Catherine McFarland for a very useful presentation.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p> <p>M Cooper /Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p>
7.	<p>Presentation on the Housing Executive’s Draft Corporate Strategy</p> <p>John Gowdy, Senior Planning & Performance Manager from the Housing Executive gave an overview on the current position of the Housing Executive’s draft Corporate Strategy.</p>	

	<p>The strategy outlines the Housing Executive’s plans and priorities over the 3 year period 2022/23 – 2024/25 period and includes a 3 Year High Level Action Plan.</p> <p>Members noted that subject to DfC approval, the document will commence a 12 week public consultation and it is planned that the final Corporate Strategy will be in place for 1 April 2025.</p> <p>Cllr O’Dowd who had recently visited the newbuild scheme in Sunningdale, Belfast highly commended the scheme.</p> <p>In response to Cllr Fitzgerald question in relation to engagement with Irish Travellers, it was confirmed that the Housing Executive have a specific Team that deal with Irish Travellers and sites and there is a Travellers Forum which meets regularly. There is a Traveller Needs Assessment which is carried out to analysis the needs every few years.</p> <p>Mark Cooper referred to the model used in Finland and keen to look at this model and explore this more in-depth. He stated that Finland has a population of 5,5 million people, in 1985 their homelessness crisis was 20,000 and by 2023, they had a reduction of -83% and currently have 429 homelessness.</p> <p>Cllr Varsani referred to the Housing Executive’s maintenance programme for grass cutting, pavements etc. in estates, but unfortunately now no one seems to take responsibility for maintaining grounds maintenance, solutions are required for pride in our estates.</p> <p>The Chair thanked John Gowdy for his informative presentation.</p>	
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>Members Queries - Universal Credit</p> <p>Information noted.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 14th November at 10.00 am in the Housing Centre, Belfast.</p>	

Meeting ended 12.15 pm.



Minutes of the 512th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 14th November 2024 at 10.30 in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey

Present:

Cllr Mark Cooper
Cllr Aaron Skinner
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

Virtual:

Cllr Aoife Finnegan
Ald Stephen McIlveen
Keith Kerrigan
Grainia Long
Jonny Blease

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Derry City & Strabane District Council
Chief Executive, NIHE
Head of Communications, NIHE

In Attendance:

Seamus Leheny
Jenny Williamson
Kelly Cameron

CEO, NIFHA
Business Manager
Secretary, Housing Council

Apologies:

Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald
Ald Amanda Grehan

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

1.	Welcome The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting. It was noted that Deirdre Varsani had tried to join the meeting via the Teams link, but due to technical difficulties was unable to join.	
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations.	

3.	<p>Report on the Housing Executive’s Board deliberations</p> <p>Alderman Keith Kerrigan gave a brief report on the Housing Executive’s Board deliberations from the meeting on 30th October. The Chair thanked Alderman Kerrigan for a comprehensive update and appreciated his work and commitment he is the only Housing Council Member currently sitting on the Board.</p>	
4.	<p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 10th October 2024</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Mary O’Dowd and Seconded by Cllr Aoife Finnegan.</p> <p>The Minutes were approved.</p>	
5.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>5.1 Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>Arrangements will be made for the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons to attend a future meeting early in the New Year. Several Members still have to submit their questions.</p> <p>A response letter had been received from the Minister in relation to 2024/25 budget, was noted.</p> <p>5.2 Housing Executive Board Membership</p> <p>It was noted that Members have received applications forms this week for the three vacancies from the Housing Council to the NIHE Board. Applications to be submitted by noon on Wednesday 27 November 2024.</p> <p>5.3 Letter to Rachel Reeves, Chancellor of the Exchequer</p> <p>As requested, a reminder letter to the British Government in relation to the 2024/25 budget has been sent, as reply is still awaited.</p> <p>The Chair noted that he had been recently contacted by the Department for Communities to inform him that it wasn’t the correct protocol to directly send a letter to the British Government and should go through local Government. In future, advice will be sought from the DfC on the protocol.</p> <p>5.4 Non attendance at meetings</p> <p>In accordance with the Housing Council Standing Orders 2 (4) If a Member fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings of the Housing Council and Committees, the Members Local Council shall be notified</p> <p>Members agreed that letters to be sent to Belfast City Council for their representative’s non-attendance at meetings.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>

	<p>It was noted that the representative for Causeway Coast & Glens also has not attended any meetings since his appointment but was supposed to join the meeting via Teams, due to technical issues he may have had problem joining, the Secretary to confirm whether or not it was his intention to join and therefore the letter would be waived.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	
6	<p>HOUSING EXECUTIVE EMERGING ISSUES & STRATEGIC ITEMS</p> <p>Grainia Long gave an update on the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress against Business Plan objectives on track. Of total KPIs, 79 green, 7 amber, 1 red as of end of Quarter 2 (September 2024); • Budget and Monitoring Round update; • Good progress on Task and Finish Group re Accommodation Solutions; • Annual round of Housing Investment Plan meetings almost complete, across all 11 Councils; setting out scale and nature of our investment locally; • Prioritisation of new build schemes following additional £20m for new build social housing; engagement with housing association sector, developers etc. Engagement with NIW re capacity constraints and impacts; • In Belfast, work ongoing to identify alternative accommodation for Welcome Organisation and steps underway to ensure robust SWEP arrangements for Winter 2024; • Approval by Board in October of new retrofit/EWI programme for 950 homes; <p>Referring to shortages of staff, Cllr O'Dowd referenced a staff member at her local Housing Executive office who was 'being moved around within different roles in the office' and was unhappy, she requested more information on the situation.</p> <p>The Chair reminded Members that it wasn't appropriate to go into local issues.</p> <p>Several Members commended their local Housing Executive staff on their work and commitment.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to be arranged for a future meeting on the Retrofit programme, including the pros and cons of the scheme; a breakdown by Council areas where these schemes are and the proposed planned schemes. 	<p style="text-align: right;">Secretary</p>

6.	<p>Seamus Leheny, Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Federation for Housing Associations (NIFHA)</p> <p>Seamus Leheny gave Members a presentation on work of Housing Associations and the future delivery of housing services in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>It was noted that the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, formed in 1977, is the representative body for NI's 20 registered housing associations.</p> <p>To ensure Housing Associations can succeed, NIFHA works with government to develop housing policy which is best placed to support social and affordable housing, while promoting best practice and innovation right across the housing sector.</p> <p>Housing Associations provide social and affordable housing across Northern Ireland, from family homes to supported living, as well as housing solutions for those who want to buy homes (through Co-ownership).</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a breakdown of Housing Association social housing dwellings per council area which includes type of residence (general needs and sheltered housing); • S Leheny to confirm an approximate figure for Housing Associations to build a 2-bedroom unit to include the cost of land, construction, fittings etc; • A breakdown of Total Cost Indicators for each council area. It was noted that TCI rates are set by Dept for Finance and Dept of Communities and HA's must build to within these budgets to avail of the Housing Association Grant (HAG); • S Leheny to review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Nov 2015) between the Housing Council and NIFHA and comeback thereon. <p>S Leheny welcomed the opportunity to working more closely with the Housing Council going forward.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Leheny for his informative presentation and welcomed the prospect to grow the working relationship between both organisations.</p>	<p>S Leheny</p> <p>S Leheny</p> <p>S Leheny</p> <p>S Leheny</p>
7.	<p>Any other business</p>	
7.1	<p>Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) All Ireland Awards 2025</p> <p>Members were reminded that it had been agreed that the Housing Council would sponsor some Organisational Awards, the first one the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) All Ireland 'Housing Hero' Individual Award in 2025 Award.</p>	

<p>7.2</p>	<p>Members agreed to proceed with the sponsor.</p> <p>Members noted that the Awards Ceremony will be held in Titanic Belfast on the 21st February 2025 and the package includes a table of up to 10 guests. The Chair requested that Members put the date in their diaries and further information will be provided nearer the time.</p> <p>Housing Executive Local office opening times</p> <p>Member noted the information provided.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 12th December at 10.30 am in Corrs Corner, Newtownabbey.</p> <p>The Chair emphasised that following the meeting, arrangements have been made for a Christmas Lunch and asked if Members could try to attend this meeting in person, but if this was not possible to let this Secretary know, in order to avoid any unnecessary costs.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>

Meeting ended 12.15 pm.