

Title of Report:	Correspondence
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Council Meeting
Date of Meeting:	3 June 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		N/A	
Included in Current Year Estimates		N/A	
Capital/Revenue		N/A	
Code		N/A	
Staffing Costs		N/A	
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 Kelly Cameron, Secretary, Northern Ireland Housing Council (email dated 8 May 2025)

2.1 Minutes of the 156th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday 10 April 2025 (copy attached)

3.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Council considers the correspondence.



Minutes of the 516th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 10th April 2025 at 10.30 am in Lisburn Civic Centre, the Island, Lisburn

Present:

Cllr Mark Cooper
Cllr Aaron Skinner
Ald Amanda Grehan
Cllr Martin Hearty

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council (Chair)
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Virtual:

Ald Keith Kerrigan
Ald Stephen McIlveen
Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald
Cllr Sean McGlinchey

Derry City & Strabane District Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

In Attendance:

David Polley
Heloise Brown
Diane Shiveral
Kelly Cameron
Maria McLaughlin

Department for Communities
Department for Communities
Department for Communities
Secretary, Housing Council
Executive Assistant, NIHE

Apologies:

Cllr Deirdre Varsani
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Mid Ulster Borough Council
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon
Borough Council

1.	Welcome The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.	
1.1	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council's representative The Chair welcomed Councillor Martin Hearty to his first meeting of the Housing Council since his appointment.	

2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations.	
3.	Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 13th March 2025 The minutes were proposed by Cllr A Skinner and seconded by Cllr A Fitzgerald. The Minutes were approved.	
4.	Matters Arising from the Minutes	
4.1	Invitation to the new Minister of Communities The Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons will join Members at the May Meeting; the agenda and questions were discussed at the 'In Committee' session.	
4.2	Non attendance at meetings As there has been no resolution regarding the attendance of the Belfast City Council's representative (Councillor Paul McCusker) at Housing Council meetings, advice has been sought from the Department for Communities and it has been agreed, going forward, to pause the issuing of Housing Council papers and minutes to the representative and Council, until this issue is resolved.	Secretary
4.3	Housing Council vacancy on Housing Executive Board The Secretary undertook to contact the Department for Communities seeking confirmation on when the competition will commence for the Housing Council vacancy on the Housing Executive Board, given that Newry & Mourne & Down Council has nominated their representative.	Secretary
4.4	Invitation to Water Service, Department for Communities DfC) and Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Invites were sent to the Water Service, DfC & DfI expressing concerns about wastewater infrastructure and the constraints this placed on the construction of houses, as well as the challenges of water connections stalling people moving into newbuild properties. It was noted that a reply had been received from DfI declining the invitation stating that, as this was an operational matter, NI Water should provide an update on how they are approaching this matter. It was agreed that Members would still like DfI to be represented from a policy viewpoint. The Secretary undertook to send another invite. All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.	Secretary

5.	<p>DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES TOP HOUSING ISSUES</p> <p>Members expressed their disappointment at receiving the report extremely overdue and that the report they received hadn't included updated information.</p> <p>David Polley & Heloise gave an update on the Department for Communities Top Issues under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) – to provide an additional 400 social homes by March 2025 of which 10% will be wheelchair accessible; • Complete preparations and present the Minister with advice on viable options to tackle the significant investment challenge and address the maintenance backlog faced by the Housing Executive; • To develop way forward policy options and legislative proposals in response to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy; • To review the Decent Homes Standard to ensure that all those living in the social rented sector have access to a fit and decent home suitable for modern living; • To review Housing Executive Administered Private Sector Grants, including the Disabled Facilities Grant, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Housing Executive; • Deliver 2758 affordable warmth measures to 1428 homes by 31 March 2025 through the Affordable Warmth Scheme; • To progress all appropriate tenancy fraud provisions within the Financial Provisions Bill; • Develop proposals and draft legislation on Injunctions against Anti-Social Behaviour and Grounds for Possession; • Deliver 846 new shared ownership homes by March 2025 (<i>via £22 million in Financial Transactions Capital funding</i>); • Develop new affordable housing options (Intermediate Rent); • To work with the Housing Executive and across Government to implement the Homelessness Strategy (PFG target) to tackle homelessness; • To implement the first phase of PRS reform as encapsulated in the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022; • Deliver a Housing Supply Strategy and Action Plan(s) to provide a framework for the delivery of the homes we need over the next 15 years. 	
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	<p>Members Questions/Comments</p> <p>Referring to the Private Rented Sector (PRS), D Polley confirmed that PRIS rents are not regulated in Northern Ireland and, in the last two years, they have increased approximately by 10% per year, due to the demand within the PRS, higher level of mortgages, taxes, stamp duty and maintenance costs.</p> <p>In relation to electrical re-wiring in PRS properties, it was noted that the phase in period for the electrical safety checks in existing tenancies in the PRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Regulations are operational from 1 April 2025, for all new private tenancies granted on or after this date; • existing tenancies granted before 1 April 2025, have to 1 December 2025 to comply. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfC to provide the number of applicants, by Council area, currently on the waiting list who have intimidation points. • Presentation to be arranged on Decent Homes Standards at the June Meeting in order to feed into the consultation document. • Presentation to be arranged on the process of how Contractors are procured; how the Contractors are allocated; how the Housing Executive measure quality of works undertaken and how complaints are dealt with. 	<p>DfC</p> <p>DfC</p> <p>Secretary</p>
6.	<p>PRESENTATION ON INTERMEDIATE RENTS</p> <p>Diane Shiveral, Department for Communities gave a presentation on Intermediate Rent.</p> <p>It was noted that the Department for Communities has produced a new affordable housing policy which aims to create an additional supply of homes, providing a new affordable “Intermediate Rent” housing option. The Department has identified an Intermediate Rent Operator who will, in due course, be awarded funding to support the delivery of new affordable rented homes in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Intermediate Rent Policy intends to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a new supply of homes; • provide much needed high-quality housing at below market rents for those on lower to moderate incomes; • offer homes for rent with at least a 20% discount on prevailing private market rents for a similar property type and size within a locality; • provide homes of a size and type suitable for the number of occupants, in locations where people wish to live; 	

- alleviate some of the up-front barriers to accessing a rented home and be targeted towards eligible lower to moderate income households;
- offer enhanced security of tenure by making available tenancies of up to five years at a time and the option to renew subject to the agreement of the landlord and tenant; and
- offer tenants access to effective and prompt property management and tenancy support services.

The Department has now identified Maple and May Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Choice Housing Ireland, as Intermediate Rent operator to deliver 300 new Intermediate Rent homes across Northern Ireland over the coming years. Once these homes are built, they will be advertised and tenancies made available to eligible households, in line with DfC's policy. It is expected the first Intermediate Rent homes will be available for rent from 2026.

Ms Shiveral confirmed that talks are still ongoing as to identifying specific sites of where the 300 houses are going to be located. The Maple & May proposal should see new homes constructed over 11 sites across 8 Local Government Districts.

A Skinner raised the issue of tenants providing a guarantor which can be a barrier for many.

Concern was expressed that areas of housing need for social housing is not always identified and would the intermediate rent products feed into possibly highlighting these unidentified areas.

It was explained that work is ongoing with the Housing Executive who are working on the methodology to identify intermediate rent need.

D Polley explained that the rent is set at 20% below market level and the loan is for 25 years and, even if the loan is paid back within that period, the property has to remain as Intermediate Rent for the 25 year period.

In response to A Grehan's question asking if the Operator or local Council can buy off the shelf properties for intermediate rent, it was explained that initially Intermediate Rent will be delivered by the Operator who will develop their own houses for renting. D Polley added that there is no reason why a Developer or local Council cannot provide their own intermediate housing for rent outside of the DfC funding model if they abide by the Intermediate Rent policy and the design standards.

Members welcomed this Policy and the Chair thanked Ms Shiveral and Mr Polley for a very informative presentation.

7.	Any Other Business	
7.1	Waiting Lists by Local Government District Report noted.	
7.2	NI Audit Report - Homelessness in NI & Media Release Noted.	
7.3	Minister's Announcement Temporary Accommodation Noted.	
7.4	Update on the Housing Executive's Damp & Mould Policy The Secretary undertook to arrange a presentation/update to be given on the Housing Executive's Damp & Mould policy, at a future meeting.	Secretary
8.	Date of Next Meeting The next meeting would be held on Thursday 8 th May 2025 at 10.00 am in the Housing Centre, Belfast. It was noted that the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons will join Members from 10.45 to 11.30 am.	

Meeting ended 12.10 pm.