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Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

17th September, 2020

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the on Friday, 18th September, 2020 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

   (a) Apologies

   (b) Minutes

   (c) Declarations of Interest

2. **Restricted Items**

   (a) Medium Term Financial Plan and Efficiency Programme (Pages 1 - 6)

   (b) Finance Update (Pages 7 - 10)

   (c) Destination Hub - concept update report (Pages 11 - 16)

   (d) Operational Recovery (Pages 17 - 34)

   (e) Waste Update – Bryson Recycling and Inner City Box Collections - Including presentation from Bryson Recycling (Pages 35 - 38)

3. **Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

   (a) Motion – National Armed Forces Day 2022 (Pages 39 - 40)

   (b) Motion – Procurement Policy – Living Wage (Pages 41 - 42)

   (c) Motion – Summer Youth Employment Programme (Pages 43 - 44)

   (d) Motion – Closure of Botanic Needle Exchange (Pages 45 - 46)

   (e) Motion - Addressing Hate and Intolerance across all our Communities (Pages 47 - 50)

4. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

   (a) Belfast: Our Recovery (Pages 51 - 76)

   (b) Customer Focus Programme Update (Pages 77 - 90)

   (c) City Region Growth Deal – update (Pages 91 - 96)

   (d) Digital programme of work 20-21 (Pages 97 - 104)

   (e) UK100 Resilient Recovery Taskforce- Submission to Comprehensive Spending Review (Pages 105 - 110)

5. **Governance**

   (a) Proposal to introduce new governance arrangements in relation to Standards (Pages 111 - 116)

6. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

   (a) Physical Programme Update (Pages 117 - 122)

   (b) Assets Update (Pages 123 - 126)

7. **Finance, Resources and Procurement**

   (a) Contracts Update (Pages 127 - 130)

8. **Equality and Good Relations**

   (a) Rural Needs: Annual Monitoring Report 2019-20 and Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 (Pages 131 - 144)

9. **Operational Issues**

   (a) Belfast City Council response to the Housing Executive's Draft Older People's Housing Strategy 202021 – 202526 (Pages 145 - 224)

   (b) Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 8 September 2020 (Pages 225 - 246)

(c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum (Pages 247 - 250)

(d) A revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees (Pages 251 - 302)

(e) Minutes of the Meeting of the Climate Crises Working Group (Pages 303 - 308)

10. **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

(a) Application to Ulster History Circle for a blue plaque: Olaudah Equiano - Councillor McMullan

(b) Babyloss Awareness Week Virtual Book of Remembrance 9-15 October - Councillor M. Kelly

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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Motion – National Armed Forces Day 2022
Date:	18th September, 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider a motion on a National Armed Forces Day 2022, which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is requested to: • Consider the motion and if the proposal is agreed a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed will be brought back.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	At the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion was proposed by Councillor Pankhurst and seconded by Councillor Hutchinson: *"This Council agrees to bid for the National Armed Forces Day to be held in Belfast in June 2022."*

	In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred without debate to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. **Financial and Resource Implications**
3.2	None associated with this report. **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**
3.3	None
4.0	**Appendices - Documents Attached**
	None

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Motion – Procurement Policy – Living Wage
Date:	18th September, 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider a motion on a Procurement Policy – Living Wage, which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is requested to: • Consider the motion and if the proposal is agreed a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed will be brought back.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	At the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion was proposed by Councillor Murphy and seconded by Councillor Beattie: *"That this council consider promoting a procurement policy that supports the principles of a real living wage and respects the rights of workers including the right to form and participate in trade unions."*

	In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred without debate to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.2	**Financial and Resource Implications** None associated with this report.
3.3	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** None
4.0	**Appendices - Documents Attached**
	None

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Motion – Summer Youth Employment Programme
Date:	18th September, 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider a motion on a Summer Youth Employment Programme, which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is requested to: • Consider the motion and if the proposal is agreed a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed will be brought back.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	At the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion was proposed by Councillor McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Beattie: *"This council agrees to work in partnership with other public sector bodies, the Belfast Chamber of Commerce and the private sector to develop a Summer Youth Employment Programme.*

	This programme should be aimed at 14-21 year olds primarily from areas of multiple deprivation from across the 4 quarters of the city. The programme will last 6 weeks. *This paid internship will aim to give the young kids of this city a decent wage, improve their skills and qualities, develop experience and hopefully lead to employment opportunities for kids from lower socio economic backgrounds in sectors that they know, enjoy and excel in.* *In developing this programme, Belfast City Council should look to Boston Mayor Marty Walsh's programme as a model of good practice in this field, which even during the COVID crisis offered 8,000 posts to young people across the city of Boston."* In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred without debate to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. **Financial and Resource Implications** 3.2 None associated with this report. **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** 3.3 None
4.0	**Appendices - Documents Attached**
	None

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Motion – Closure of Botanic Needle Exchange
Date:	18th September, 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider a motion on the closure of the Botanic Needle Exchange which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is requested to: • Consider the motion and if the proposal is agreed a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed will be brought back.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	At the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion was proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCusker: *"This council notes the closing of the needle exchange facility on Botanic Avenue following on from the closure of the Boots facility in City Centre earlier this year. This council will invite the Public Health Agency to its next meeting of the People and*

	Communities Committee to address these worrying closures of much needed facilities and what longer term strategy it has in place to: 1. *address drug use and misuse in the City Centre,* 2. *drive forward a civic conversation of drug classifications, legislation and decriminalisation,* 3. *develop harm reduction models that save lives* 4. *and proactively addresses the concerns of local residents."* In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred without debate to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. **Financial and Resource Implications**
3.2	None associated with this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.3	None
4.0	**Appendices - Documents Attached**
	None

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Motion – Addressing Hate and Intolerance across all our Communities
Date:	18th September, 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider a motion on Addressing Hate and Intolerance across all our Communities, which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is requested to: • Consider the motion and if the proposal is agreed a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed will be brought back.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	At the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion was proposed by Councillor O'Hara and seconded by Councillor Groogan: *"The Belfast Agenda has an ambition to be a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive City for all. While we have made significant progress there are opportunities for enhancing this work. This council recognises the work that has been undertaken particularly by*

	many in the community and voluntary sector to improve relations and realise the Belfast Agenda. However, gaps remain, including through the allocation of funding. *This Council recognises the scourge of Hate Crime and Incidents in the City. In 2019/2020 there were 694 Hate Crimes and 758 Hate Incidents reported to Police in the Belfast District Area on the basis of sexual orientation, race and religion. We appreciate that there is a significant underreporting of hate crimes and incidents. There were 98 hate crimes and incidents on the basis of transgender status and 171 crimes and incidents on the basis of disability status across all of Northern Ireland.* *This Council recognises that it has a statutory duty to address Good Relations but also recognises that this is on the limited basis of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. This only covers some of the hate crime categories yet we understand that to tackle hate and intolerance we must promote good relations between those groups who experience hate but are not covered by the Good Relations duty.* *This Council therefore commits to:* • *Supporting the extension of the Good Relations duty to the hate crime categories* • *Write to the Executive Office requesting flexibility in its Good Relations funding and request that the Executive Office consider extension of its Good Relations duties to the hate crime categories* • *Council officers scope internal mechanisms re good relations and equality and diversity funding to fund more proactive work in addressing hate crime and fulfilling the ambition of the Belfast Agenda."* • In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred without debate to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.2	**<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>** None associated with this report.
3.3	**<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>** None
4.0	**Appendices - Documents Attached**

	None

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	Belfast: Our Recovery
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Resources

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To provide Members with an update on the significant work to be taken forward by the Council and working across government and with city partners to support the city and its communities to respond and recover from the Covoid-10 pandemic. The strong commitment by Council to support communities, businesses and vulnerable people during these challenging times is set out in the attached draft document: 'Belfast: Our Recovery'.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: (i) Note that the Committee will receive a presentation on the key elements of the Belfast: Our Recovery' plan for the city as set out within this report;

	(ii) Consider and endorse the Belfast: Our Recovery' and note the priority areas of focus and the associated support, interventions and programmes committed to within the framework. (iii) Agree that Party Group Leaders' and the Chief Executive signatories be included in the Foreword to demonstrate the strong cross-party commitment and support to the city recovery. (iv) Agree that the Belfast: Our Recovery' be published as a live and evolving framework – implementation plans will be adapted as circumstances change and as informed by continued engagement with communities and city stakeholders and partners. (v) Note the intention to proactively engage with communities, central government, key decision makers and private sector to intensify the focus on our priorities for recovery and to secure the necessary support and resources to underpin our work.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	In the midst of the ongoing pandemic, authorities are rightly focused on minimising the human cost, providing relief to their communities and delivering essential day-to-day services. Another major challenge for the Council and city partners is to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their local economies, so that businesses can once again thrive and provide employment opportunities, minimise potential job losses and retain the vibrancy of local communities and the city centre.
3.2	Members will be aware that we are still in the midst of a significant pandemic emergency with new localised restrictions recently introduced within the city to reduce the spread of the infection rates and to manage the significant risks which exist.
3.3	There is clearly a significant civic leadership and convening role for the Council to bring together key partners and work with communities to respond to the current emergency situation, ensuring the necessary measures are taken to keep citizens safe, whilst retaining critical services.
3.4	It is evident that there will be lasting structural changes to the city's economy, its infrastructure, its environment and to its communities, and this will likely result in financial and economic uncertainty for some time. There is a significant risk that existing inequalities, including emotional health and wellbeing, social isolation, addictions and poverty will be further amplified during this period.
3.5	The Belfast: Our Recovery document seeks to mitigate the immediate and short- term impacts of the pandemic, including, for example job losses, the need for skilling and reskilling to access employment opportunities, risks around vulnerable people and social isolation, and

	providing targeted support. Emphasis is given to how we maximise the social value of our own capital investments and grant programmes to support recovery, as well as the opportunities presented by our procurement, to promote inclusive growth, support local businesses and supply chains, and create local jobs. The document also highlights the need for a people and jobs led approach to recovery.
3.6	We are committed to work alongside communities and city partners to bring forward a series of medium and longer-term interventions to build the foundations for sustained recovery. These will need to maximise opportunities to sustain and create jobs, provide skills and employment support including traditional skills, drive investment in communities creating local assets and facilities, support local businesses and create community wealth, and support key sectors particularly those impacted by the pandemic. Examples of some of the levers which we will seek to accelerate as part of recovery include the Belfast Region City Deal investment, digital innovation, focus on green stimulus, use of public land assets to bring forward mixed-use developments.
3.7	It is also important to recognise that the Recovery document does not seek to replace existing commitments and ambitions set out within longer-term strategies such as the Belfast Agenda and its review, the Corporate Plan and the Resilience Strategy, Instead, it will help shape and sharpen our focus going forward through a 'recovery lens'.
3.8	Whilst the intention is to publish the Belfast: Our Recovery following consideration by SP&R Committee and endorsement by Full Council in early October 2020, it is recognised that the document represents a 'moment in time' picture of our current understanding of the emerging impacts and opportunities for driving recovery. It is likely that as the pandemic continues, circumstances may change and our plans and priorities will need to be updated to reflect new evidence and data as it becomes available, and to be informed by continual engagement and input from communities across Belfast in identifying and co-designing interventions going forward.
3.9	The framework covers five core strands which are not being considered in isolation but in terms of they can be brought together to build the foundations for recovery and deliver sustainable inclusive growth. (1) Our city – safe, vibrant, connected spaces and places (2) Our services – adoptive and responsive to local needs (3) Our communities - strengthened and resilient (4) Our economy – resilience and inclusive (5) Our environment – sustainable and climate resilient

	(6) Our digital innovation – transformative and leading edge
3.10	In order to help drive recovery, we must continue to build on what has already been achieved in the city and maintain our competitiveness and attractiveness in terms of investment and further develop the opportunities which we have collaboratively worked to create. It is proposed that we work with our city partners to develop a strong public private Renewed Ambition programme around the city's offering as a place to invest in line with our Inclusive Growth Strategy.
3.11	It is intended, as part of this Renewed Ambition programme, to bring forward a joint public private programme of activity, including advocacy and lobbying, to highlight the city's offer in terms of the built environment, whilst ensuring that the city evolves to meet the requirements of the local communities and those who live, work and visit here.
	Community Recovery
3.12	While there clearly remains an immediate need to continue to provide emergency support and ensuring key services and assets remain operational, looking ahead it will be important that we work collaboratively and harness the energy of our communities and city partners, ensuring greater co-ordination and innovation in addressing the specific issues that communities face across the city. As we move forward, there is a need to build community confidence, capacity and resilience across neighbourhoods through a range of programmes of support.
3.12	The benefit and potential impact of this approach is clearly demonstrated through the community response hub established by the Council to support residents during the coronavirus pandemic. Working with DFC and a range of community, voluntary and statutory partners the hub provide assistance to Belfast residents, including the coordination and distribution of 110,000 food parcels to vulnerable people across the city as well as specific emotional, financial and other support services. Communities were first to respond to the pandemic and have shown the strength and resilience of the sector in challenging times. In support of this work, the Council allocated over £1.6m funding to over 280 local community and voluntary organisations to support vulnerable people and families and assist community recovery.
3.13	The Council has also continued to deliver the £6m council grants programmes, despite the financial difficulties we face, to ensure important support services and programmes are delivered across the city. We will work with central government and other funding bodies to bring forward further financial support packages for communities and the third sector to help

	address many of the social challenges which will be amplified as a direct result of the impact of the pandemic. As previously discussed with Members we will also review our own internal resources and services, starting with a transformational review of community provision within the city. **Engaging with communities to support recovery**
3.14	Engagement plans are being developed to ensure participation of communities and stakeholders in the further development and ongoing implementation of our recovery plans, this will include (but is not limited to): the identification of ll area priorities for community recovery, shaping of key strategic work programmes (e.g. Climate change), and engaging at an area level to inform the upcoming review of the Belfast Agenda.
3.15	In the current climate, Members will recognise the challenges that exist in engaging with the public due to the restrictions on public gatherings and face to face meetings. Our engagement plans will need to utilise new and innovative engagement methods, using technology to maximise participation. As a first step, Members should note that a new online Engagement platform has now been procured and is in the early stages of deployment. This new platform will form a key element of our engagement approach over the coming months and, in tandem with other engagement tools such as webinars and social media, will be an opportunity for promoting citizen participation in city recovery, shaping Council services, policies and plans, and in the wider community planning process. **Financing Recovery**
3.16	Members will be aware that officers are continuing to work with and lobby NI Executive Departments to identify and draw down any external funding to support our recovery plans. This includes the recent £3m+ Revitalisation Capital Fund secured with funding from Department for Communities and Department of Infrastructure. We will continue to work with central government and other partners to maximise the Belfast allocation of any emerging funding programmes (e.g. DFI funding for blue and green infrastructure, DfE £17.2m investment to support apprenticeships etc, PEACE PLUS etc).
3.17	Financial and resource implications There are no resource requirements as a consequence of this paper
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.18	The Belfast: Our Recovery seeks to reduce inequalities by proposing a series of measures to support recovery.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Belfast: Our Recovery

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	Customer Focus Programme Update
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Finance & Resources
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director Cormac Quinn, Customer Services Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	Members are reminded that in May 2020 the Committee was provided with an update on the Customer Focus Programme which included an overview of work being undertaken to support the Covid 19 Recovery programme. Members were also advised that, due to programme resources being redirected, a review of the programme plan was required and would be reported to a future committee.
1.2	This report provides an update on further activity in support of Recovery and provides an update on the programme plan and the channel shift strategy which is a key tenet of the Customer Focus programme.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: 1. Note the update on support provided to the Recovery Programme**.** 2. Note the Chanel Shift Strategy summarised.

	3. Note the update on the programme plan and the overview attached at **Appendix 2.** 4. Note the planned work on services for Elected Members which have been progressed to outline design stage as part of the future blueprint attached at **Appendix 3.** 5. Note update on the Council's new website and telephony upgrade. 6. Note that staff and Trade Unions have been engaged and will continue to be consulted as we move to implementation.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**<u>Update on support for the Recovery Programme</u>** Members will be aware that, during the Covid-19 emergency, the Customer Focus Programme diverted resources to support the Community Response Hub and established a customer contact centre in response to requirements for food distribution and referrals for welfare support. The contact centre also supported the recovery of Birth Registrations and switchboard operations. The Community Response Hub and contact centre have now been stood down and the booking line for Birth Registration and operation of switchboard have reverted to Legal and Civic Services. There have been many lessons learned from the response to Covid 19 which has enabled us to test our customer focus principles and has evidenced the strong commitment and resilience of all staff involved. As part of recovery of Council services, including the Council's main switchboard service, we are routinely monitoring customer contact and adapting our communication with customers as required to manage our contact channels effectively. Analysis of telephone call volumes confirms that the Council continues to experience high volumes of calls. In order to manage telephony effectively and to ensure our customers have a positive experience, the highest volume of calls (Waste Collections) has been directed away from switchboard. This means the welcome message that customers hear when they contact the Council has been changed to promote the use of our website to encourage customers to use our online services and to direct calls to the appropriate service. Staff from the Customer Focus Programme together with Continuous Improvement, Legal and Civic Services, Digital Services, Marketing and Corporate Communications and departments are continuing to support the Council's Recovery Programme and how customer channels are being managed.
3.2	**<u>Delivery of the new future blueprint for Customer</u>** Since the meeting in May 2020 the programme plan has been reviewed in light of resources required to respond to the Covid 19 emergency and the subsequent Recovery Programme.

The diagram attached at **Appendix 1** sets outs the draft future blueprint for the Customer hub which was presented at the May 2020 committee.

Our vision of customer focussed services will ensure that we deliver:

- Optimised customer contact – professionalising resources and providing modern digital and telephony systems with access to real time data on contact performance
- Channel shift – moving where possible to digitally enabled self-serve solutions
- Customer centricity – designing our services around the needs of our customers.

The Customer Hub blueprint remains as is, putting our customers at the heart of everything, ensuring we provide a consistent and professional service, affording our customers choice and convenience. This means improving and aligning all our access to service channels – telephone, face to face, website, and social media. To support this we have developed a Channel Shift Strategy.

3.3 **Channel Shift Strategy**

We have worked with our Strategic Delivery Partner, PA Consulting Limited, to develop a Channel Shift Strategy.

What do we mean by Channel shift?

By ''Channel Shift' we mean supporting customers to use the channels that best meet their individual needs and preferences, while providing best value for the Council. This includes the various methods or systems for communication, access, provision and distribution of services that Council has at its disposal e.g. face-to-face, telephone, online, webchat, email, text, letter. These interactions will be with a wide variety of stakeholders and are designed around deep insights into what way various segments of the Council's overall service user community wish to be engaged, what best suits their lifestyles and abilities. These needs and preferences will likely vary across different types of services.

The focus of the channel strategy is on delivering the best outcomes (financial and non-financial) from using our available resources effectively e.g. more expensive channels such as telephone and face-to-face are directed to those with greatest need / where they will have greatest impact.

What will Channel Shift Deliver?

Belfast City Council wants to meet customer expectations, to deliver a better customer experience whilst reducing costs and so are harnessing digital as the channel of choice for delivery of services and information. It is important to note the strategy is 'Digital First not Digital Only' which meets the needs of the majority, enabling provision of sensitive services via more costly channels for those who need it most.

The internet has made customers much more digitally aware and has led to a major shift in how products and services we all consume are both designed and delivered. Customers expect information to be personalised and readily available at the touch of a button. We can see in recent months how digital channels have become even more important during the Covid 19 emergency in enabling different ways of working and supporting local communities.

This Digital First principle reinforces the Council's ambitions to deliver services digitally as far as possible. However, Digital First does not mean that all services to all customers will be delivered through digital channels. Face to face services will be required and for some customers this may continue to be their preferred channel.

Digital First is not just about a new website or new technology. It is about leveraging digital solutions for each service, end to end, to:

- Reduce call volumes
- Eliminate Service failure
- Improve the customer experience
- Enable real time reporting for operatives
- Improve access to real time data.

This has the potential to fundamentally shift the relationship between services and users, as well has how staff work. As such the implementation of 'Digital first' (end to end) and the creation of the Customer Hub is as much a cultural change as it is a change of delivery model. When re-designing each service it is important to implement the channel(s) that are most effective for the service being provided.

3.4 **Channel Shift Focuses on Good Service Design**

Developing effective channel shift therefore is not about a one size fits all strategy for the entire council. It is not about:

- launching all of our services on all new channels without much thought to the relevance and cost of doing so
- focusing on switching customer contact to the cheapest channel (often assumed to be the internet) without much thought as to the relevance of this channel to the service or customer base.

A more sophisticated approach is required to realise channel shift; to ensure that the most effective channels are leveraged for each service, and for each customer. This approach will be delivered through the application of the design principles (in particular Digital First, Customer Focus) and good Service Design.

The Service Design approach already adopted by Council will be applied to each service as it is on-boarded into the Customer Hub and will ensure that for each service we **understand who the Customers are** for that service. A Customer persona is created for each customer type; detailing the needs, behaviours, pain points and preferred contact points for that customer type. By understanding:

- **Who** BCC customers are
- **What** their needs and capabilities are, and
- **How** they prefer to contact the council,

The Council will be able to develop a Channel Shift campaign consisting of interventions/activities that are ***tailored*** to those customer types to ensure a successful change to adherence of the Digital First principle.

3.5 **Revised Implementation Plan and how we will do this**

Given the complexity of the customer programme it will not be possible to implement all of its elements at one time. Attached at **Appendix 2** is a high level plan setting out the key milestones for the implementation of the Customer Hub in April 2021. Staff and customers have been involved in the programme to date and this will continue throughout the implementation.

By April 2021 we will have the following in place:

3.6 **Customer Hub**

This new function will deal with customer contact for all departments and services, across all channels (online, mobile, telephone, face-to-face, email, and social media).

Initially the hub will manage all customer contact for cleansing/waste and calls currently through the main switchboard and corporate complaints numbers. There is further work planned to co-design processes including the handoff from customer hub to services in other departments. The implementation initially will be on a 'wide and thin' basis i.e. a basic level of information and signposting for customers will be provided at the first point of contact for all services across all channels.

This will provide a platform for on-boarding of services in the next phase after April 2021, deepening the information and value at first point of contact as services are designed end to end - thus improving customer experience.

The structure/establishment of the Customer Hub and detailed design of posts is currently in progress. It is envisaged that staff will be in post by January 2021 to allow for staff development and the building of capacity and support systems and processes for hub operation.

Integral to this formative stage is the inclusion of staff and Trade Unions in understanding the impact of these changes on current posts and post holders and the transition to the new Customer Hub. A separate report on the establishment of the Customer Hub, people, posts and finance will be presented at a future committee.

Discussions on the physical location of the customer hub remain at an early stage and work to examine the feasibility of options has not progressed due to the pandemic and will be reviewed in light of the Recovery Programme and the planning of access to buildings.

3.7 **Elected Members' future blueprint**

A Task and Finish Working Group has been established with elected members who have participated in 3 workshops to date to identify and design solutions to support elected members in their constituency work.

We plan to have a dedicated contact channel for elected members within the Customer Hub. Additionally we will provide members with real time information on service delivery so they can be informed of issues earlier, enabling them to be responsive to constituents' queries. Members will also have the ability to track issues they have raised and will have visibility of issues emerging in their areas. A future blueprint for services for elected members can be found at **Appendix 3.**

Work will continue with members in the coming months to design services to meet their needs which may include prototyping and trialling of solutions.

3.8 **Missed Bins**

Aligned to the overall Resources and Fleet transition and improvement programme, we are seeking to address the issue of missed bin collections. We have focussed specific resource on how we can address these issues including information flows between elected members, customers, staff and managers. For example a prototype of an app to report missed bins has been developed and plans for implementation are in progress. This will help provide better business intelligence and improved understanding of the cause of service failures and identifying interventions to improve service.

3.9 **Enabling Infrastructure**

The success of the Customer Focus programme is wholly dependent on the delivery of enabling infrastructure – web and social media channels provided by Corporate Communications and the technical infrastructure, telephony and systems delivered by Digital Services. The following is an update on these key elements of the programme:

3.10 **New Council Website Launched**

The Council's new website launched on Tuesday 28 July 2020 in line with the programme plan. There are a number of new design features on the website which are being assessed using web analytics. An overview of performance over the same period from 2019 is as follows:

- Page views have increased by almost 44%. These page views include views of our online forms. We also need to consider an increase in people searching for info during COVID-19.
- Users are viewing more than one page on our website during their visit and are not 'exiting' out of pages early in their journey. Visitors are finding content relevant - both bounce rates and % exits have dropped.
- Users are finding information quicker than they previously would have - average time on page has dropped. We have a cookie statement in place where users are required to opt in to analytics. Our supplier had made us aware that we could see a decline to visitor numbers due to this.

Work is continuing through Marketing and Corporate Communications in partnership with departments to enhance our web content. As we work through, this will iterate and will be ongoing.

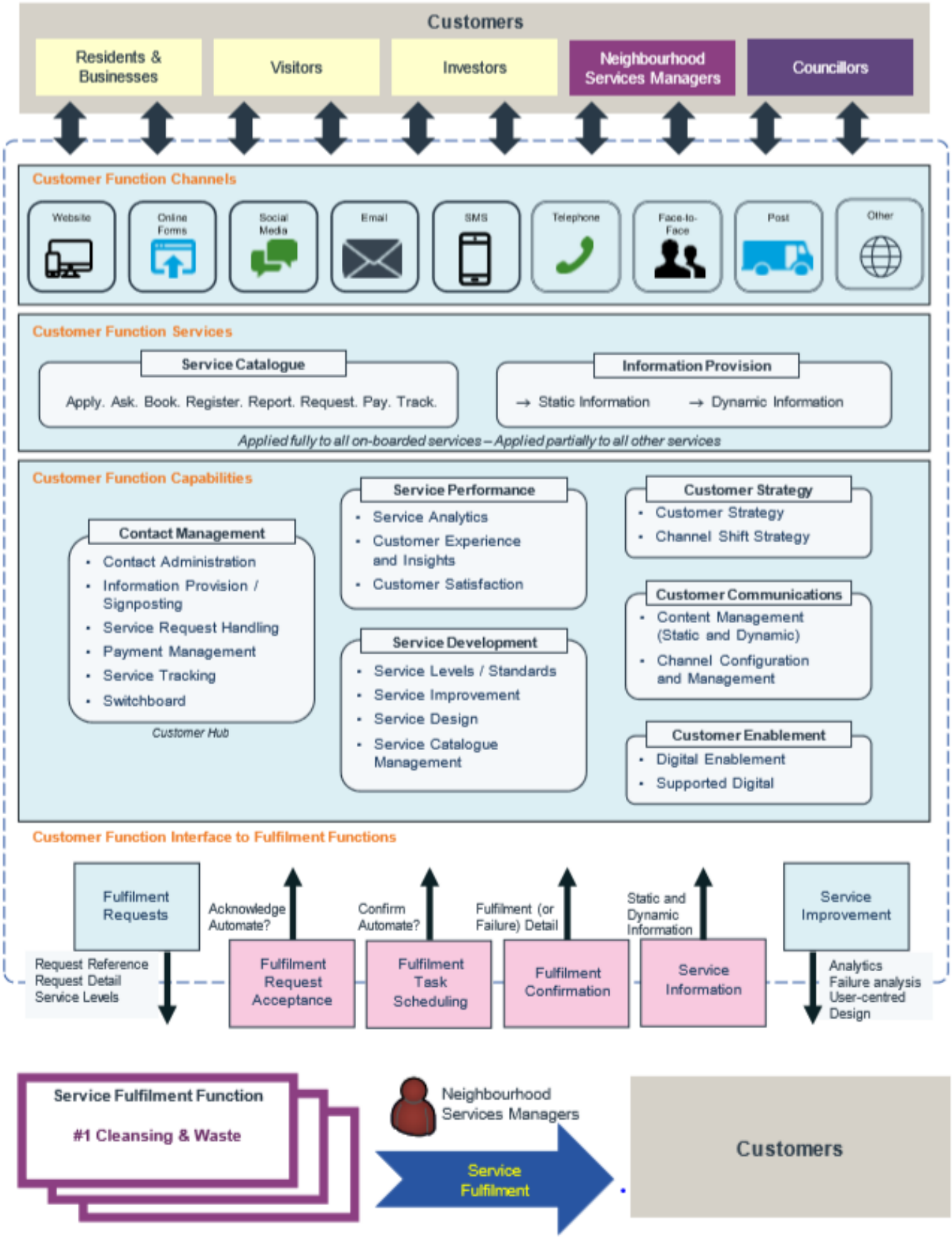
3.11 **Telephony Infrastructure Upgraded**

As evidenced through lockdown and now into recovery our telephone solution is one of the Council's most mission-critical systems. Digital Services has just completed the upgrade of our telephony solution which simplifies administration, and enhances security and business continuity. The system upgrade also introduces enhanced features and services which will be required to support modern digital workplace requirements and the integrated telephony features needed for the Customer Focus Programme. These include:

- Contact Centre
    - Voice, Chat, SMS, Email, FAX, and AI Chatbots
    - Built-in Call and Screen Recording
    - Built-in Workforce Scheduling
- Customised CRM integration
    - Automatically access customer information
    - Pre-populate CRM with customer information
    - Click to dial – call, text or email customers within CRM
- Softphones
    - make and receive calls on your laptop, mobile phone or desk phone
    - voicemail integrated with email

	Financial & Resource Implications
3.12	SP&R agreed in November 2017 that a budget of £500k be set aside for the customer focus project. Staff and Trade Unions have been engaged throughout the programme. As we move to Delivery, with Trade Union agreement we have established a sub group of JNCC to facilitate further engagement and consultation on staff implications of the programme in line with agreed HR policies and procedures.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.13	Work on the EQIA for the Customer Focus Programme has been completed and the outcome published on our community engagement platform, Citizenspace.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Customer Focus Draft Future Blueprint Appendix 2 - High level plan showing Key Milestones for implementation Appendix 3 – Draft Blueprint of future services for Elected Members

Appendix 1 Blueprint for the new Customer Function



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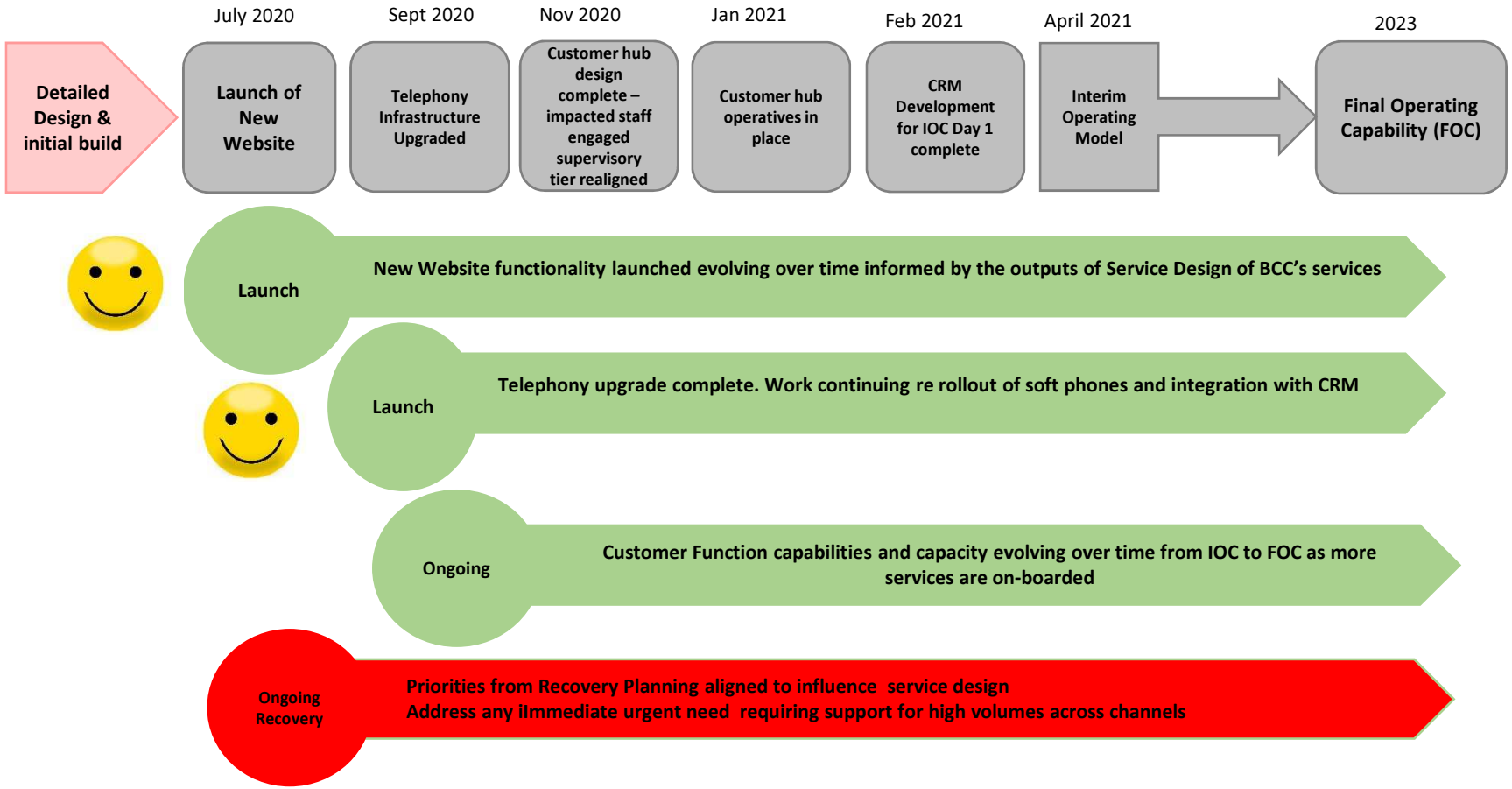
High Level Implementation Plan



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Customer Programme - Services for Elected Members

What you Need	INFORMATION	ISSUE MANAGEMENT & RESOLUTION	INSIGHT & INTELLIGENCE
Specfics of Needs	Information you want includes: - Belfast City Council - clarity on council services and who manages them - Calendar of Meetings - Calendar of events - Other agencies and their responsibilties	You want: - To have a trusted point of contact to raise issues with and be confident they will manage the issue and provide updates on the path to resolution. -To be able to see the tracking of your issue to resolution and easily access updates.	Real-time insights & intelligence you want includes: - Current key council-wide issues - Area specific insights - eg missed bins, heatmaps, persistent issues -Dashboards for area
Planned Products to Meet your Needs	**New Website** New website is now live with a better experience in finding information. Developments will continue in line with the customer programme needs. **Members Portal** A new members portal will be designed to provide the information members need.	**Dedicated Member Channels** A dedicated telephone number and email address for Elected Members to Customer Hub will be in place- where trained staff will manage your queries and issues to achieve resolution. A hub knowledge bank and information flows will be developed - Hub staff will have excellent working relationships with colleagues in all departments and services and will know how best to resolve individual queries or issues. **Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)** Microsoft Dynamics platform will be used to develop a CRM to capture and record all contact by members and customers and will record and track all issues right through to resolutions.	**Members Portal** The real-time insights & intelligence you want will be provided through the development of the members portal, sourcing the relevant information from the CRM. Your tailored dashboard will provide both general council top issues, area specific issues and access to the tracking of issues you have raised or that your constituents have raised. You will be able to access your portal via an indivdiual log in on your computer, laptop or mobile phone.
How the products will be developed	**Service Design - Collaboration** All products will be developed through a service design approach which involves the input of all stakeholders - elected members, services, developers. Due to the current Covid-19 situation, workshops may be mostly held virtually and the input channel for elected members will be through the Task and Finsh Group which was set up in 2019 and has all party representation.		
What product can be developed during Phase 1 (September 2020 - April 2021)?	**New Website** New website Phase 1 is already live. As the Customer Hub is formed and information and information flows are developed, the website will develop in line with that. **Members Portal** Development of the members portal will commence in Phase 1 with basic information.	**Dedicated Member Channels** Dedicated telephone and email address will be ready for use in April 2021. Knowledge Bank and information flows will be developed on a wide and thin basis - understanding the basic information regarding services and who to contact for higher level service knowledge. Members will be able to route their issues through the Hub to manage. **Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)** The basics of the CRM will be development during Phase 1 to record member and customer queries and issues. The knowledge bank will have basic service information and FAQs in order for the Hub team to answer basic queries without having to pass on to services, For queries that require the specific service to resolve, the initial information flows from Hub to services will be developed.	**Members Portal** Insights and Intelligence development will commence during Phase 1 at a basic level and will be dependent on the development of the CRM. The richer insight will develop once the deep dives into services occurs, post April 2021 in further phases.

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STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	City Region Growth Deal – update
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked: • Note the programme overview, the update in respect of each of the pillars and the progress that has been made in Outline Business Case (OBC) development. • Note the key strategic challenges ahead and the importance the BRCD Programme will play in the region's recovery from the Covid-19 emergency.

	• Note the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.
3.0	**Main report**
	Programme Overview
3.1	The SP&R Committee in June were provided with an update on the early stages of the BRCD team getting the programme moving again following delays due to the pandemic. Since then, meetings of the Executive Board, Advisory Boards, Finance and Communications Forums have now all resumed via Microsoft Teams.
3.2	The Executive Board and the Advisory Boards for each of the investment priorities have been reviewing and challenging the BRCD programmes and projects to ensure that they are strongly aligned with the emerging Economic Recovery Strategy. Partners have also worked intensively to progress the development of business cases across all the pillars of Investment, ensuring that key stakeholders and government partners continue to be engaged despite the communications challenges presented by the COVID crisis.
3.3	The timeline for developing OBCs for all the capital projects that were outlined in the Heads of Terms has understandably had to be reviewed. As a result the BRCD partners' very ambitious target of having all business cases completed and deal documents drafted by September 2020, is no longer achievable. The partners remain determined to have a deal in place so that funding can start to flow from 1 April 2021 and discussions are ongoing with the NI and UK Governments and BRCD Partners in relation to the revised timeline to sign a 'Deal Document'.
3.4	As outlined in the previous report the NI Executive announced £350m match funding for the BRCD, confirming the commitment to an overall investment package from the UK and NI Governments and the BRCD partners of approximately £850M. Governance arrangements have now therefore been established by the UK and NI Governments to oversee the development of the City and Growth Deals across N. Ireland. Discussions are also ongoing with the Department of Finance to inform the Financial Agreement element of the Deal Document, but this work can only be completed when OBCs have been completed and detailed consideration has been given to issues such as timescales for implementation and affordability.
3.5	Communication and engagement continues to be a priority both at a project and programme level. However, planned work on strategic engagement, including both business and political engagement has been delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis. Briefing documents outlining key

	economic and social benefits of each project and overall BRCD programme are currently being updated to support the engagement activities that will take place in the coming months
	BRCD and COVID Recovery
3.6	The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have severe and ongoing health, societal and economic impacts. The work that has been completed to date by the BRCD partners to review projects in the context of the COVID crisis has identified that overall the programme of investment is strongly aligned with the needs of the economy following the COVID crisis, building on strongest and most resilient sectors and delivering digital innovation & skills capability that is now so critical to businesses & communities. This is reflected in the synergies between the BRCD programme of investment and emerging proposals for rebuilding the NI Economy.
3.7	The BRCD partners recognise that the BRCD is principally a long-term programme, designed to deliver transformative capital investments to support sectors with strong potential to sustain and create employment. However, the partners also established a digital task and finish group to identify short-term measures to boost digital skills and support digital transformation. This group has worked closely with industry and government to identify a small number of interventions that could help to improve digital literacy, skills and capability that have proven so critical in recent months and which will also be essential if the economy is to move into recovery.
3.8	It is recognised that that there are particular challenges in relation to the Tourism and Regeneration Pillar and, as outlined below, partners have been working intensively with government departments and agencies, such as Tourism NI, to consider the impact of the crisis on the sector and to look at how the BRCD investments could fit with the medium to long term path to recovery.
	Investment Priorities **Tourism and Regeneration**
3.9	There has been intensive engagement with partners to consider and address the impact of COVID 19 on the programme of investment. Tourism NI have commissioned and shared new analysis designed to inform plans to support the recovery of the tourism sector, examining different scenarios and how long it may take for visitors to return and this is being considered by all project sponsors as they revise and update OBCs. Importantly there is a recognition that many of the proposed BRCD projects are long-term in nature and delivery timelines will align

	with the expected return of international visitors to pre-COVID levels in 2-3 years. OBCs for regeneration projects are also reflecting and seeking to respond to the intensified challenges for town and city centres. As a result of this work submission of OBCs has been significantly delayed with draft OBCs, including in relation to the Belfast Destination Hub now expected between September and October 2020. A separate report on the Belfast Destination Hub will also be considered by Members at this meeting.
	Innovation
3.10	This continues to be one of the most advanced elements of the BRCD programme, with recognition of the significant contribution to recovery of major investments in artificial intelligence, data analytics, advanced manufacturing and life and health sciences. The first three draft OBCs, Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), Global Innovation Institute (GII) and Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (i-REACH) were submitted to UK and NI government departments for consideration and review in February 2020 and are now being revised to take account of feedback received from government, with revised OBCs likely to be completed in September. A fourth OBC, the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) has also now been submitted for review and has just received feedback from the NI Government.
	Digital
3.11	The work of Fraunhofer Institute/BABLE, to develop an implementation plan for the main elements of the Belfast Smart District and Regional Programme was significantly impacted as a result of COVID 19, but has now been completed. The outputs from BABLE are feeding into the Programme Business Case which is now being developed with the support of PWC. The programme has changed and developed significantly in recent months with an increasing focus on the use of regional challenge funds and an infrastructure fund to support the development of digital capability in the economy and the development of innovative solutions to help tackle economic, societal and environmental challenges. These funds will be critical to the delivery of the ambitions for the Belfast Smart District. The Programme Business Case is progressing at pace with the Strategic Case and Options presented to the Digital Advisory Board in August. Further workshops with the Department for the Economy have also taken place in order to progress the Economic Case and there will also be a need for detailed engagement with the UK Government in advance of finalising a draft business case.

	Infrastructure
3.12	Despite delays due to the COVID crisis, significant progress has been made in developing OBCs, for the Newry Southern Relief Road, Lagan Bridge and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2. The BRCD Team held an Infrastructure Integration Workshop in early July to provide a common understanding of programme outcomes and the role of the Infrastructure Pillar, to identify opportunities for integration and to help create connections between the Infrastructure Projects and other pillars/projects. Following this workshop draft OBCs were updated before being presented to the Infrastructure Advisory Board and submitted for consideration at the August Executive Board.
	Employability and Skills (E&S)
3.13	The Employability & Skills work programme has been realigned to focus on developing the proposed interventions within the thematic areas identified within the E&S Proposition, namely, Careers, Employability and Skills. To inform the proposals within each of the thematic areas engagement has been taking place with partners and key stakeholders. A workshop session took place in July with partners to share emerging findings and seek views on emerging proposals. Further refinement of proposals, alongside the development of potential future governance models, will take place over the coming weeks and will form the component delivery elements of the Employability & Skills Programme. Work has also been progressed on the development of an inclusive growth and sustainability framework to ensure that the need for inclusion is integrated across the programme.
3.14	Due to the impact of COVID 19 the BRCD Executive Board agreed to fast track BRCD work in the area of digital engagement and skills. The digital skills task and finish group has identified a small number of key recommendations to partners and government that could help to strengthen digital literacy, skills and business capability**.**
	BRCD Council Panel
3.15	Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a joint forum for members from all six councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council has four members on the Forum and as agreed by this committee the four nominees from BCC are the party group leaders (or their nominees) of the four largest parties. As highlighted due to the emergency pandemic, the April and June meetings of the BRCD Council Panel were cancelled. An update was provided to Panel Members in August.

3.16	A virtual meeting of the panel has now been arranged for the 30th September which will be hosted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. At this meeting the Panel will be provided with a detailed update on progress across the programme and consider the how the programme can help to support a long-term, resilient recovery from the COVID crisis. Members will also discuss key challenges facing the programme including the challenges of communicating effectively in the current environment and how partners can rebuild momentum and improve communications and engagement.
	Next Steps
3.17	The BRCD programme is facing a number of challenges as partners seek to ensure that the programme is progressed at pace so that it can play its part in economic recovery. Over the coming months Advisory Boards, the Executive Board, Partners and Government Departments will all need to consider the OBCs that are being finalised across all the pillars of investment. In addition, options in relation to future governance, financial plans and agreements, and deal documentation will need to be reviewed and progressed. Additional meetings of key boards and forums will undoubtedly be required to rebuild momentum. Simultaneously there will be a need to develop effective communications and engagement with partners and political and business representatives.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.18	All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.19	The Approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that; *'BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.'*
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Digital programme of work 20-21
Date:	18th September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Resources
Contact Officer:	Paul Gribben, Head of Digital Services

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	Whilst uncertainties around Covid19 and the knock on impact on recovery planning make it challenging for all services to prioritise their programmes of work, there are critical digital projects that must continue to be prioritised for completion or must now be initiated despite the current difficulties we are facing. Examples of these projects include the completion of the HR and Payroll programme and the resourcing and delivery of a new integrated finance and procurement system.
1.2	Several of these systems are at the heart of how the Council operates and are the foundations for running our organisation, allowing us to take orders, collect money, manage assets, pay vendors, and to run our payrolls. It is also very difficult for any organisation to

	accomplish anything innovative unless its core processes are reliable, stable and cost-effective.
1.3	This report outlines the projects that have been prioritised as part of the Digital Services programme of work 2020-21. It excludes business as usual activities that are operating successfully with a small amount of staff on site to provide physical support on a rota basis and with the remaining staff working very effectively from home.
2.0	**Recommendations**
	The Committee is asked to • Note the contents of the report and the Digital programme of work outlined in Appendix 1.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1 3.2	It is essential to have robust corporate and line of business systems and processes to support the Council during a period where our focus is not just on delivering systems for innovation and efficiency but also ensuring that they are designed for business continuity and resiliency. Delivering these core systems relies on a robust, stable and available infrastructure, well defined and managed interfaces for integration and reporting, and solid security access and compliance controls. This means that we have prioritised a wide range of projects to support a stable and efficient operating environment.
3.3	**Appendix 1** provides a summary of the current digital programme of work. It is split into 6 categories. <u>Corporate priorities</u> – These are projects that support the delivery of core Corporate programmes and systems. Each individual project is a significant undertaking for any organisation. <u>Regional projects</u> – These are projects that are being delivered at a regional level and where Belfast City Council typically takes a leading role. Like corporate projects these projects result in significant business change and require substantial resources to deliver. <u>Departmental projects</u> – These technology projects help to deliver the objectives of individual departmental business plans.

	Corporate infrastructure Projects – These provide vital infrastructure improvements that are required to ensure a stable and secure technology infrastructure that will support efficient operational delivery. External Business – These projects are delivered on behalf of external organisations and generate income for the Council. Emerging Projects – Projects that are currently not on the programme of work but which will be scheduled in when resources become available.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.4	The Digital Services programme is managed within the Digital Services revenue budget and the Council's capital programme.
3.5	Any further project requests that are approved as new priorities will have a direct impact on the delivery of the programme of work as outlined in **Appendix 1**.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.6	None
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: DIGITAL Programme of Work 2020-21

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Appendix 1: DIGITAL Programme of Work 2020-21

Corporate Projects

Project	Description	Status
Customer Focus Programme **(Programming, CRM, Website, Integration Platform, Infrastructure Architecture, Telephony)**	Implementation of Customer Focus supporting technology	New website live. Online forms programme of work to redevelop forms to new website template in progress Telephony upgrade due 5th September. CRM - service design and detailed business process reengineering required before development can commence.
HR and Payroll **(Phase II – Reporting; Training & Recruitment; Expenses; Disciplinary, Grievance and PDP modules; Online Recruitment; Time and Attendance)**	HR and Payroll, Time & Attendance and Travel & Subsistence Replacement	Phase II implementation underway Agreeing and building organisational hierarchy essential to Phase II success
Finance system replacement **(Management Accounts; Banking & Treasury management; Invoice Management; Accounts Receivable; Goods Receipting; Requisitioning & Invoice creation; Contract Management; Sourcing)**	Procurement of new integrated Finance and Procurement system	Project board established Market testing complete As-is process review complete Specification in draft format Procurement to begin in October
Corporate Asset Management	Implementation of corporate approach to Asset Management	Procurement complete System configuration underway
Health & Safety Risk Assessment Replacement	System implementation for new Health & Safety system	System configuration nearing completion Data migration planned Discussion ongoing with supplier around training and go-live timeline due to current Recovery resourcing requirements
Data Analytics maturity assessment	Data Analytics gap analysis	Procurement of consultants complete Need to schedule suitable time to complete workshops
Consultation and Engagement system	Improved system for consultation and engagement	Procurement complete Implementation planning underway
Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRMS)	Interim approach to records management, system procurement and implementation	New recommendation for an interim approach to be taken to CMT for decision in September

Regional projects

Project	Description	Status
Planning Portal	Implementation of regional Planning Portal and back office system	Procurement complete. Internal BCC project team established. Implementation workshops underway.
Transfer of HMO	Finalising implementation for HMO regional system	Online forms to be updated
Port Health – NI SPS Control system	Brexit operational readiness at border control posts	Early engagement with DAERA on system development and implementation

Departmental Priorities

Project	Description	Status
Legal Case Management	Completion of roll out of Legal Case Management system	System live Supplier issues being resolved Outstanding functionality and issues resolution in progress
City Cemetery Heritage Project	Technology requirements for City Cemetery visitor attraction (Networking; EPOS ;AV equipment; Software -Visitor Centre & online; Mobile App; Mapping of Burial Plots)	Awaiting final designs from external contractor to proceed with most areas Procurement of mapping burial plots to begin September 20
HR Skills Testing	Online skills testing for clerical posts	On hold

Corporate Infrastructure Priorities

Project	Description	Status
Local Full Fibre Programme	Local Full Fibre Programme	
• **Public Sector Anchor Tenancy (PSAT)**	Council sites full fibre network connectivity (202 sites)	85% complete. 173 sites out of 202. Estimated date for completion end of September.
• **Public Sector Asset Reuse (PSAR)**	Business case to bring City Centre 'Streets Ahead' ducting to the market to deliver better and more cost effective fibre broadband services to the City Centre.	Ducting survey partially complete. Working on business case for DCMS funding.
• **BCC network redesign and implementation**	Redesign network to support full fibre connections to increase bandwidth to all Council buildings. Future proofing network for the next 25 years.	Core network switches installed. Phased roll out as contracts for network circuits cease.

Mobile Application Development Platform	System Development platform for mobile applications	Staff Intranet mobile app live Missed bins mobile app in development
Windows 10 upgrade	Workplace productivity improvements	Essential Windows 10 upgrade to new version as the Windows 10 version we are currently running reaches the end of support on the 12th November 2020. CMT paper to follow outlining installation requirements and user impact.
Strategic Information Security Assessment	Security infrastructure review to understand requirements for hybrid office and remote working environments	Initiation meeting complete Workshops scheduled for September
ISP Upgrade and internet resiliency	Upgrade to resilient internet service with x5 bandwidth	Implementation to be completed November 2020
Office 365 upgrade	Move to click-to-run version of Office 365 to avoid significant licensing uplift	Upgrade planning underway
Wireless LAN	Upgrade of BCC internal Wi-Fi across core buildings	Completion of Wi-Fi network at Duncrue final outstanding task BCC Corporate available at Duncrue Guest and Public Wi-Fi connections to be completed following ISP upgrade.
Cloud application security assessment	Assessment to understand risk around unauthorised cloud application usage. (Audit recommendation)	Currently reviewing if current firewall technology can be used to carry out the audit avoiding additional spend
Cloud Strategy	Development of strategic approach to Cloud adoption and governance	Draft strategy under review. Will be completed alongside the Strategic Information Security assessment.
UPS enhancement	Adding Uninterruptable Power supplies to critical infrastructure components to protect from power surges and to allow graceful shutdown in the event of a power failure.	Procurement complete Implementation planning underway
Backup environment enhancement	Additional storage and licensing to accommodate growing backup requirements	Procurement complete Implementation planning underway
Audio Visual requirements to support hybrid remote/on premise meetings	To support hybrid council and committee meetings and to upgrade emergency planning room	Procurement underway

External Business

Project	Description	Status
Information @ Work (Enterprise) system implementation for NIHE	Document Management system to support delivery of Housing Benefits for the Housing executive	Implementation in progress
Rate relief system (Northgate)	Implementation of Northgate Rate Relief system	Procurement complete Implementation in progress

Tree system re-development	Re-development of trees system with view to selling on to interested local authorities	Being progressed as a low priority when time permits
NI Business Start-up programme Phase II	NI Business start-up programme additional development	Awaiting decision on extension of programme

Emerging Projects

Project	Description	Status
IT Requirements to support Operational Recovery	Technology requirements as a result of Recovery	Main areas of focus include: • Improving customer contact • Delivery of online services – including Interim booking systems • Data analytics and reporting • Improved digital workplace – IT equipment; security enhancements; collaboration solutions; remote access
Building Control system replacement	Procurement of new Building Control and Licensing systems to support flexible mobile workforce and online services	Market testing complete Process review underway
Regulatory Services system replacement	Procurement of new Regulatory Services system to support flexible mobile workforce and online services	
Service Desk and IT Asset Management system	To replace the existing in-house CRM and Asset Management systems with a dedicated IT Service Management. (internal Audit recommendation)	Market testing underway Business case being developed
Corporate Booking system (Customer Focus Programme)	To meet internal and external booking functionality across the Council. Would require system consolidation	Market testing underway

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Resilient Recovery Taskforce- Declaration from cities to influence Comprehensive Spending Review
Date:	18th September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Grainia Long, Commissioner for Resilience
Contact Officer:	Richard McLernon, Project Co-ordinator

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	Belfast City Council is a member of the UK100 Resilient Recovery Task Force – a network of city Mayors (or their nominees) aimed at influencing outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review and other government stimulus post-Covid 19, as well as influencing UK government's climate targets at COP26, the UN Climate Change conference in 2021. A high level declaration/submission to the CSR requires SP&R approval on 18th September, so that Belfast can be added to the list of city's endorsing the document. This paper provides a brief overview and seeks SP&R approval for the declaration in Appendix One.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: - Review the language in the 'declaration' in Appendix One

	- Approve Belfast's support for the 'declaration' and support its submission, with the aim of influencing Comprehensive Spending Review outcomes.
3.0	**Main report**
	Key Issues
3.1	Belfast City Council joined the UK100 Resilient Recovery Taskforce in July, and its first meeting of city Mayors and their nominees took place in August. At its first meeting, it agreed that the network would produce a submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).
3.2	Senior officers from each city council met last week via virtual workshops to agree the submission. The work is aligned with Core Cities submission.
3.3	Appendix One contains the declaration, which strongly reflects Belfast City Council's discussions on inclusive recovery. The main narrative and 'asks' in the declaration are: - The development of a Net Zero Development Bank to fund UK infrastructure aimed at driving the transition to a net zero economy - Investment in upgrading the electricity grid. (Note: we have asked that the Energy Regulator in Northern Ireland is referenced in the declaration.) - A government led target to decarbonise buildings and heat (a focus on retrofit very similar in ambition to the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission) - Speed up transition to electric vehicles - An enhanced devolution settlement- making reference mainly to devolution of powers in England, but we have asked for the document to specifically reference the need to robust powers for Councils
3.4	Members are aware that BCC continues to engage with Core Cities and a number of other structures to influence CSR outcomes- this declaration is just one of several avenues we are pursuing, to fund climate-resilient stimulus.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.5	None at present
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.6	None

4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix One - Draft UK100 Resilient Recovery ‘Declaration’.

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++ FINAL DRAFT ++
RESILIENT RECOVERY TASK FORCE DECLARATION
10th September 2020

The need for an economic recovery package that creates resilience in our communities and reduces carbon emissions has never been greater. The Covid19 crisis has highlighted the fragility of our economic structures, their exposure to external shocks and the need to support people in our poorest communities. We must seize the opportunity to create healthier, safer and more prosperous communities, building in resilience to climate change through investing in the green economy. Such an approach will enable us to reskill our workforce, enable job creation, create cleaner, healthier, safer places to work and live, and restore the nature upon which we all rely.

As elected leaders of our communities we are playing an essential role in tackling the current Covid19 crisis, and we are fulfilling our role in building a resilient recovery from it. Our knowledge and understanding of our communities means we are well placed to design and deliver solutions that improve health, prosperity and the environment. Adequate national Government investment, ambitious national frameworks and the necessary powers would enhance our ability to act in partnership to tackle the threat of climate and to reskill our workforces to set them on a path to a flourishing net zero economy.

Together we can renew our communities by working in partnership with government if action is taken forward across Government to:

- **Increase local Net Zero investment** by establishing *a Net Zero Development Bank to bring together all national government financing for the transition to Net Zero.* The bank should have both an obligation and the capacity to work with local authorities to develop place-based Net Zero projects and programmes, leveraging additional private investment to kickstart local energy schemes which are at too early a stage to be attractive to private finance.
- **Invest in renewing the electricity grid** to ensure a smart decentralised energy system, enabled by *a national framework for local area energy planning.* The Core mandate of Ofgem and of devolved nation energy regulators should be expanded to include supporting the delivery of net zero emissions, and we support the regulation of future investment in Distribution Network Operators so that a greater role can be given to regional and sub-national plans and ambition.
- **Ensure that the nation's homes are retrofitted to be energy efficient** by designing and delivering, with local government, *a Government-led long-term plan to decarbonise buildings and heat* that sets out actions and investment needed to enable all existing homes and buildings to be net zero carbon by 2050 at the very latest. The plan should at least meet the manifesto commitment of £9bn public investment to deliver Net Zero in our homes and buildings and seeks to crowd in further private investment to meet this goal.
- **Speed up the transition to low and zero emission travel** and enable the UK to be a global leader in developing low-emission vehicles including freight. This should include a commitment to providing seamless access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the UK, while also providing long-term investment in public

transport networks and in creating built environments that prioritise walking and cycling.

- **Expand local powers to take action on Net Zero** by enabling the national Net Zero effort through *an enhanced devolution settlement*, combining ambitious national strategy with a fresh and fair mix of powers and resources for local & combined authorities; enabling clear & accountable local net zero delivery that unleashes the social and economic potential of every community.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Proposal to introduce new governance arrangements in relation to Standards
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officers:	Sarah Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer Susan McNeill, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the SP&R Committee to propose the introduction of a new Standards Committee, the designation of the City Solicitor into a new "Monitoring Officer" role responsible for all issues in relation to standards to ensure the Council, its officers and elected Members maintain the highest standards of conduct in all that they do.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	It is recommended that Members: (i) note the attached report.

	(ii) provide approval in principle to establish a Standards Committee and to designate a Monitoring Officer as in the main report below.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Background It is proposed that the Council introduces additional arrangements to ensure that the Council, its officers and elected Members maintain the highest standards of conduct in all that they do. Such arrangements could include the establishment of a new Standards Committee, the designation of a "Monitoring Officer" responsible for all issues in relation to standards, and the introduction of a number of new governance arrangements aimed at promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and officers. The establishment of such arrangements would demonstrate a firm commitment on behalf of the Council to promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Members within the Council and the probity of all the Council's proceedings. Research into strong ethical leadership in the public sector (and local government in particular)[1] suggests that those councils with good records of ethical conduct show evidence of strong Member / officer relationships. They demonstrate a culture of partnership and joint ethical leadership led by a Standards Committee (including its independent/lay members) in concert with party group leaders (political) and senior officers (managerial). It is proposed to create a similar regime to the model used in Wales where the Public Sector Ombudsman has encouraged councils to introduce Local Resolution Arrangements to provide an opportunity for relatively minor complaints and issues to be resolved 'in-house' without the need for referral to the Ombudsman's office.
3.2	Standards Committee It is proposed that the Council establish a Standards Committee whose main functions would be to promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Councillors within the Council and the probity of all the Council's proceedings. This would include considering and making recommendations to the Council on the contents of the Code of Conduct for Members, the Members/Officer protocol and providing advice and guidance on standards in general across the Council. Appointment to such a Committee would be made in the normal way as prescribed by Schedules 1 and 2 of the 2014 Act. The size of the Committee will need to be agreed.

[1] https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/view/525252-the-importance-of-ethical-leadership-in-public-sector-organisations

	It is recommended that the Standards Committee appoint a number of independent Members whose views are to be sought and taken into account before any recommendations are made by the Committee (as is the case in similar Committees in England, Wales and Scotland). Such independents would be required to be impartial and they would be required to make the declaration at Schedule 3 of the 2014 Act that they will observe the Code of Conduct for Councillors. The Council may wish to include certain stipulations, for example that a person may not be appointed if they have been a councillor or officer of the Council in the past 5 years (or even a party worker or relative). It is proposed that the Committee would meet quarterly and when required. CIPFA guidance indicates that the role of a Standards Committee is distinct from that of the Audit Panel / Committee whose primary role in relation to standards and ethical conduct is to satisfy itself that there are appropriate arrangements in place, particularly in support of the Annual Governance Statement. Where a local authority does have a standards committee, the lead on promoting high standards of conduct may be taken by that committee, and the most appropriate role for the audit committee would be to consider the effectiveness of the standards committee as part of the annual governance review. The Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee could therefore include the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by Members and officers, oversight of any training required on all matters relating standards and conduct, advising the Council on the Code of Conduct for Councillors, oversight of the Member-Officer protocol (to be reviewed), oversight of the Members' Register and Declaration of Interests and associated procedures and oversight of the Council Constitution. The Standards Committee would also have a role in deciding whether any issues reported to the Monitoring Officer under the Local Resolution Arrangements should be closed, dealt with in house or referred to the Local Government Standards Commissioner. In such cases, the Monitoring Officer would be responsible for facilitating the local resolution arrangements alongside the Chief Executive and any Members directly involved in such cases. Once initial enquiries have been completed the Monitoring Officer will make a recommendation to the Standards Committee, based on his/her professional opinion that either: i) there is no issue and the matter be closed ii) the matter has been sufficiently dealt with under Local Resolution Arrangements iii) the matter cannot be resolved in house and should be referred to the Local Government Commissioner for Standards

	There would however be some element of flexibility in matters of urgency or potential criminal matters where a referral may need to be made directly by the Chief Executive.
3.3	<u>Councillor Training on standards and conduct</u> It is recommended that the Standards Committee would have oversight of Councillor training and development in relation to standards and conduct. This would include training on the Code of Conduct including the Register and Declaration of Interests but would extend to any aspect of the role of a Member that impacts on standards in general. Surveys conducted with existing Standards Committees in other jurisdictions indicate that the preferred training by Members is scenario-based and interactive, using real life examples in areas such as: – Training on the Member / Officer Protocol (to be reviewed with a joint declaration on protection to be developed and agreed) – Ethical leadership – Pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests – Unconscious bias – Role of members / Role of civic dignitaries – Interacting with the public – Interaction with the press
3.4	<u>Monitoring Officer</u> It is proposed that the Council designates a lead officer into a specific role, similar to the Monitoring Officer role introduced in Great Britain[2] to ensure that the Council, its officers and its elected Members maintain the highest standard of conduct in everything they do. It is proposed that the City Solicitor be designated as the Monitoring Officer and that they will also act as the lead officer in respect of servicing the Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer will be responsible for ensuring that the Council operates within the law. Their principal responsibilities will be: • to report to the Council on matters they believe are, or may be, illegal or which amount to maladministration • to be responsible for all matters relating to the conduct of councillors, including oversight of any Local Resolution Arrangements

[2] The Monitoring Officer role is provided for by the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 (England, Scotland and Wales) as amended by schedule 5, paragraph 24 of the *Local Government Act* 2000.

	• to be responsible for the operation, review and updating of the constitution; this includes providing advice on the interpretation of the constitution, and making determinations where necessary. • to take steps to protect the integrity and reputation of the Council and Councillors in respect of Council functions and decision making.
3.5	<u>Local Resolution Protocol for dealing with minor complaints</u> The Standards Committee will not have the same powers of investigation and/or sanction that a similar Standards Committee in England would have. In Northern Ireland the powers of investigation, adjudication and sanction are vested in the Office of the Local Government Commissioner for Standards via Section 55 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. The situation in Wales is similar to that in Northern Ireland where responsibility for investigating and adjudicating on potential breaches of the Code of Conduct remain with a centralised Standards Commissioner. In Wales the Public Services Ombudsman has encouraged councils to introduce Local Resolution Arrangements which provide an opportunity for relatively minor complaints and issues to be resolved 'in house' without the need for referral to the Commissioner. A Model Protocol has been adopted by the majority of councils in Wales. These Local Resolution arrangements are entirely voluntary and no individual councillor is obliged to participate and is free to make a complaint to the Ombudsman at any time. It is recommended that Belfast City Council introduce a similar Local Resolution Protocol as that in place in Wales which would provide a voluntary process within which the Standards Committee, the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer could act as a **facilitator** in dealing with complaints between Members or between officers and Members with a view to seeking an agreed resolution. If an agreement is reached during the facilitation stage then no further action is required. If agreement cannot be reached the aggrieved Member/officer would always have the opportunity of referring the matter to the Ombudsman / Local Government Commissioner for Standards. Examples of resolutions might include issue of a letter of apology, a written undertaking or commitment not to breach the Code of Conduct in the future, or a commitment to undertake training or an agreement that on the basis of the evidence that no further action should be taken and the matter be closed.
3.6	<u>Next steps</u> If agreed in principle a draft Terms of Reference and more details on the operation of this committee would be brought to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for agreement.

3.7	Financial & Resource Implications There will be minor financial implications associated with introducing a new Standing Committee. If the Standards Committee is to meet quarterly then it will require an associated Special Responsibility Allowance be allocated to the Chair and Deputy Chair positions of responsibility and funded from the reallocation of the existing Special Responsibility Allowance fund. The committee will be serviced by existing resources within Governance and Compliance; and Democratic Services.
3.8	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment None.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	18th September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Michelle Bagnall, Programme Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The Council's Capital programme is a rolling programme of investment which either improves the existing Council facilities or provides new Council facilities. This report seeks approval to move the reservoir Safety Programme to the next stage of the capital programme; seeks a decision from members on an electric vehicle to replace the current Lord Mayor vehicle; and asks Members to agree a request for permission to carry out aerial footage over Belfast Zoo.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is requested to –

	▪ *Project Movement* - Agree that the Reservoir Safety Programme is moved to a Stage 3 committed project, with a maximum £1.6m budget allocated; ▪ *Fleet Programme - Lord Mayor's Car* - agree the Audi E-Tron as the Lord Mayor's new electric vehicle ▪ agree the request for permission for aerial footage over Council lands at Belfast Zoo.
3.0	**Main report**
	Reservoir Safety Programme
3.1	Members have previously agreed that all capital projects must go through a 3 Stage approval process where decisions on which projects progress are taken by SP&R. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project.
3.2	Members are reminded that the reservoir safety programme is an agreed Stage 2-uncommitted project on the council's Capital Programme. This programme has emerged from a number of safety reports conducted in relation to addressing safety issues associated with reservoirs - the Waterworks upper, Waterworks Lower and Alexandra Park reservoirs are within the scope of the programme. An outline business case has now been completed and a preferred option identified the necessary approach to dealing with statutory safety requirements, and associated costs.
3.3	**Members are asked to agree that the Reservoir Safety Programme moves to Stage 3 Committed and it is recommended that a maximum budget of £1.6m is allocated**. The Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed the affordability of this project due to the importance of statutory safety requirements around reservoir management.
	Fleet Replacement Programme - Replacement of the Lord Mayor's Car
3.4	At the SP&R Committee meeting on 21st February the Committee '*agreed to replace the Lord Mayor's car with a fully electric model, with the final decision on the type of model to be agreed by the appropriate Council Manager*'. At the Council meeting on 2nd March this decision was amended to provide **that the final decision on the type of model to be selected be taken by the SP&R Committee.**
3.5	Members are reminded that the key issue remains around acquiring a replacement vehicle that achieves value for money, offers reliability given the commitments of the Lord Mayor's Office and fulfils the function of a civic vehicle fit for high profile office (security of both Lord Mayor and Chain; wide ranging travel needs from short to long distance journeys). Members are also reminded that usage, based on typical requirements on duties of the Lord Mayor Office, shows an average mileage of 6,000 miles per year, with a typical average daily mileage of 30 miles.

	Whilst the usage profile is mainly around the city, there is reasonably regular requirement for longer trips, so in terms of electric vehicle, the long range performance on an electric charge, and well as comfort, is an important factor.
3.6	Appendix One provides a detailed overview of five vehicles available via council procurement mechanism and includes key performance information such as charge performance, safety rating (NCAP rating) and drive type (e.g. all wheel). Each vehicle has also been reviewed by Lord Mayor's Office and Fleet Management Unit to assess suitability in fulfilling the function of civic duty requirements. Feedback has been provided and included in Appendix One. Having assessed the options that are available against the key issues as outlined above in 3.5 **officers would recommend the Audi E-Tron model giving the mileage capacity, the rear seating space and the boot space capacity**.
3.7	**Members are asked to consider the options and agree the recommended replacement vehicle – Audi E-Tron.** The lead-in time for a new vehicle is 4-6months. The current lease is up in February 2021 and therefore Members are asked to note that a **decision on the preferred new model must be taken this month to ensure sufficient time for the new vehicle to arrive**. Members are asked to note that officers will are looking at the lease period in terms of value for money etc. and any lease will be for at least at 2 year period initially. Once the new electric vehicle has been agreed, and manufacturing charging requirement is confirmed, the Property Maintenance Unit will take the necessary steps to install appropriate charging point (circa £2k cost) at City Hall. *Request for permission for aerial footage of council lands - Belfast Zoo*
3.8	Members will be aware that work is ongoing on looking at Belfast Zoo. To inform this work special permission for aerial footage to be taken of the Zoo site (both the existing and old Zoo sites) is being requested in the absence of an agreed council Drone policy. Members are asked to note that all necessary licence will be sought.
3.9	**<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>** *Financial –-* • Reservoir Safety Programme - a maximum £1.6m budget – the Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council • Fleet Replacement Programme – Lease of the Lord Mayor's Car – these costs are covered under the Fleet Replacement Programme (costs are dependent on option to be agreed and subsequent formal procurement process); and costs for charging point will be found within existing budget.

	• Aerial footage of Belfast Zoo site - costs will be drawn from existing budgets.
3.10	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment** All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Electric Vehicles overview

Overview - All electric vehicle information

NB images are for illustrative purpose and not accurate scale.

	ELECTRIC				
MODEL & SPEC	*Estate*			*Hatchback*	
Car model	**AUDI E-TRON**	**MERCEDES-BENZ EQC**	**JAGUAR I-PACE**	**HYUNDAI IONIQ***	**TESLA MODEL S***
Trim	230kW 50 Quattro 71kWh Sport 5dr Auto [C+S]	300kW AMG Line 80kWh 5dr Auto	294kW EV400 S 90kWh 5dr Auto	100kW Premium 38kWh 5dr Auto (*Another HYUNDAI IONIQ model is availablity, at higher cost (£25k))	Long Range AWD 5dr Auto (*Another 2 Telsa models are availble, at a higher cost (MRP £98K))
Release Date	2020	2019	2018	2019	2019
NCAP Overall Rating	5 star	5 star	5 star	0 star	0 star
CO2 Emissions Combined	0g/km	0g/km	0g/km	0g/km	0g/km
CO2 g/km Emissions					
Standard Euro Emissions	N	EURO 6	N		
Insurance Group	49E	50E	49E	16E	
Transmission	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic	Automatic
Fuel	Electric	Electric	Electric	Electric	Electric
Gears	1 SPEED	1 SPEED	1 SPEED	1 SPEED	1 SPEED
Drive	Four Wheel Drive	Four Wheel Drive	Four Wheel Drive	Front wheel drive	Four Wheel Drive
Body Type	Estate	Estate	Estate	Hatchback	Hatchback
Length (mm)	4901	4761	4682	4470	4979
Width (mm)		1884	1895	1820	1964
Height (mm)		1623	1565	1450	
Luggage Capacity (Seats Up)	660	500		350	748
Number of Seats	5	5	5	5	5
CHARGE					
Electric maximum range (NEDC)	204miles	259miles	298miles	124miles	393miles
COSTS					
NB these are retail costs - unoffical lease quotes have been provided relative to retail cost					
Retail Price (excl. VAT) **	£53,150.00	£55,766.67	£53,270.83	£26,925.83	approximately £78,000
Annual Least quotations. NB the quotes for the all electric vehicles are unoffical quotes	**£7,920.60**	**£7,058.52**	**£7,518.24**	**£2,697.20**	**£10,061.88**
Suitability assessment lead by Lord Mayors Office	*Real world range* estimated at over 200 miles. The rear seating area for the Civic Dignitary was notably more spacious than the other options. The boot space is also notably larger than the others; long distance trips and member / officer luggage a relevant consideration.* ***Given this conclusion, against assessment of other***	*Very similar in all regards to the Audi, with real world range comparable. However, it was notably smaller in the rear seating area and in terms of boot space.*	*Slightly higher real world range but vehicle was notably smaller than in the rear of the vehicle compared to the Audi and Mercedes, with a significantly smaller boot space. Presents practical working challenges in terms of space.*	*The size, rear cabin and boot space, and range present significant practical challenges when considering the working functions required. Real world range lower than 150 miles which would preclude long distance trips without charge.*	*The size and space is comparable with other options. In terms of range it is the best option, however it is the most expensive.*

** Real world range refers to estimate length of journey on a charge, which takes account of 'real conditions' and tends to be lower than manufacturing range.*
*** NB The manufacturer vehicle purchase price should be taken as a helpful guide - the vehicle retail purchase price can change quickly due to market pressures*
Further note re Delivery and costs:
Delivery lead in times a minimum 4 months / up to 6 months - no engagement or negotiations to date, will be subject to the outcomes of formal quotation and negotiation process.

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STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

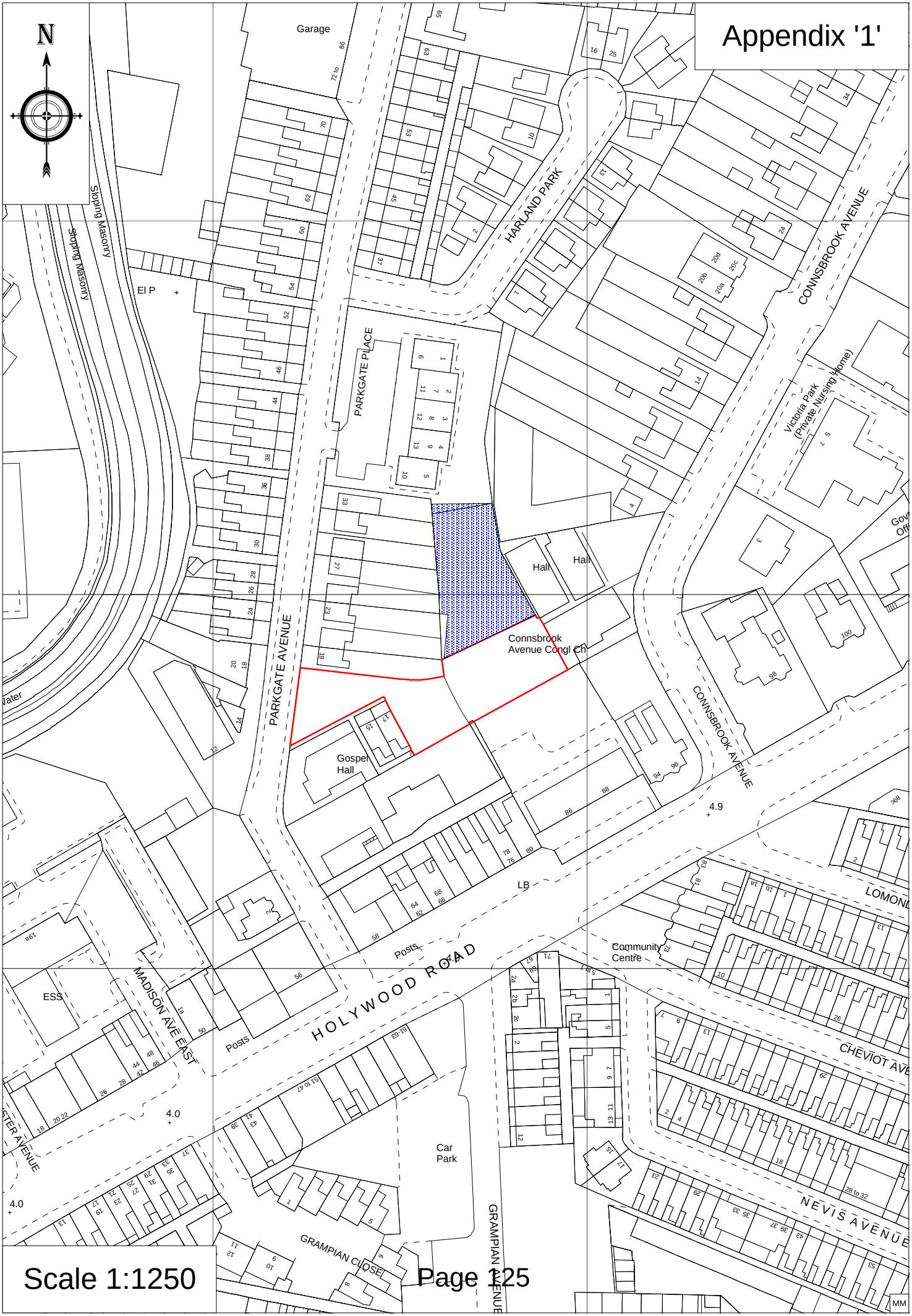
Subject:	Assets Update **i)** Parkgate Avenue Off Street Car Park – New Licence Agreement
Date:	18th September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Pamela Davison & Celine Dunlop, Estates Team Leaders

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to asset related disposal, acquisition and Estates matters.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	**i) Parkgate Avenue Off Street Car Park – Renewal of Licence Agreement** Members are asked to approve a new licence with the Directors of Argento Contemporary Jewellery Ltd for a right to pass and repass across Parkgate Avenue Car Park.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**i) Parkgate Avenue Off Street Car Park – Renewal of Licence Agreement** **Key Issues**

3.2	The Parkgate Avenue Car Park transferred to the Council under Local Government Reform in April 2015 from the Department for Regional Development (DRD). The Directors of Argento Contemporary Jewellery Ltd own an adjoining piece of land and currently hold a Licence Agreement for the right for Argento staff and invitees to pass and repass over the Council's Car Park to access their site via a double vehicular gate and a pedestrian turnstile. This Licence Agreement is due to expire on 31 August 2020. Agreement has been reached to enter into a new 12 month licence agreement from 1 September 2020 with a fee of £3,000 per annum. The terms of the proposed new licence agreement protect the Council's interest in the car park, regularise the situation and obligate the Directors to indemnify the Council against any claims for injury, damage or loss of property relating to their use. **Financial and Resources Implications**
3.3	The Council will receive an income of £3,000 per annum. Staff resources from the Estates Management Unit and Legal Services will be involved in the completion of the proposed new lease. **Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**
3,4	None associated with this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Location map showing the Parkgate Avenue Off Street Car Park


Appendix '1'
N
Garage
Sloping Masonry
Sloping Masonry
El P
HARLAND PARK
CONNSBROOK AVENUE
PARKGATE PLACE
Victoria Park (Private Nursing Home)
Hall
Hall
Connsbrook Avenue Congl Ch
PARKGATE AVENUE
Gospel Hall
CONNSBROOK AVENUE
4.9
LB
Posts
HOLYWOOD ROAD
Community Centre
ESS
MADISON AVE EAST
Posts
4.0
Car Park
GRAMPIAN AVENUE
GRAMPIAN CLOSE
NEVIS AVENUE
CHEVIOT AVE
LOMOND
4.0
Scale 1:1250
Page 125
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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Contracts Update
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: • seek approval from members for tenders and STAs over £30,000
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 **(Table 1)** • Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 **(Table 2)**
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	<u>Competitive Tenders</u> Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit

	of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council. Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
3.2	<u>Single Tender Actions (STAs)</u> The following STAs are being submitted for approval: Direct award of a contract to Green Garden Ltd for the provision of forced and bedding flower bulbs for 2 years for a total value of £35k. No response to previously advertised tender therefore direct award permitted in accordance Public Contracts Regulations. Green Garden Ltd were previously successful for a quotation for forced and bedding flower bulbs. Direct award of a contract to Northgate for the provision of additional interfaces relating to the Low Income Rate Relief (LIRR) system for 6 months at a total value of £61k. This is required to enable an ongoing service provision to Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The cost will be re-charged to NIHE
3.3	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets
3.4	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 Table 1 Competitive Tenders Table 2 Direct Award Contracts

Table 1 – Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	Senior Responsible Officer	Short description of goods/ services
Supply and Delivery of Fleet Consumables	Up to 4 years	£174,000	R Black/ S Toland	Contract for the supply of fleet spare parts and consumables to support vehicle maintenance for frontline services.
Tender for collection of and disposal of asbestos and other hazardous waste	Up to 4 years	£200,000	R Black/ S Toland	Contract for the collection and disposal of a variety of hazardous waste streams.
Supply of Paints and Sundries	Up to 4 years	£120,000	S Grimes	Contract for the supply of paint and associated sundries to support operational maintenance teams.
Strategic consultancy services for Belfast Region City Deal	Up to 1 year	£200,000	R Cregan	Contract to provide economic, financial and commercial advice in relation to achieving a Deal Document for Belfast Region City Deal
Provision of PEACE IV Youth Group Residentials	Up to 20 months	£48,000	R Black/ S Toland	PEACE IV funded project to support children and young people.

Table 2- Direct Award Contracts (Single Tender Action)

Title of Tender	Supplier	Total Value
Procurement for the purchase of forced bulbs and flower bulbs	Green Garden Ltd	£35,000
Procurement of Interfaces for the Low Income Rate Relief system (LIRR)	Northgate	£61,000

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STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Rural Needs: Annual Monitoring Report 2019-20 and Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance & Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of report or summary of main issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: • submit for approval the Council's Rural Needs' Annual Monitoring Return for 2019-2020; and • advise Members of the relevant recommendations from the Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the submission of the Council's Annual Monitoring Return to DAERA for 2019-2020, on a holding basis, subject to ratification by the Council at its meeting on 1 October; and

	• Note the recommendations from the Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 and that the Equality and Diversity Unit will co-ordinate their implementation
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Background The Council has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016 to consider rural needs in the development of new policies, plans or strategies or in any service design/delivery decisions. The rural population of Belfast is approximately 1,484 people comprising the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview. Officers complete a Rural Needs Impact Assessment form.
3.2	Key Issues **Annual Monitoring Return** The requirement to monitor and report applied to all Northern Ireland departments and district councils from 1st June 2017. The Council is required under section 3(1) of the Act to: • Compile information on the exercise of its functions under section 1(1) of the Act; • Include that information in their annual report; and • Send that information to DAERA on the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return The Rural Needs Annual Monitoring return relating to the period April 2019 – March 2020 is set out in **Appendix 1.** A copy of this return, together with a list of the Rural Needs Impact Assessments completed will be published on the Council's website as the Council does not have an annual report.
3.2	**Report on the Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016** The Rural Needs Working Group (comprising members from various government departments, Health Trusts, Local Authorities and the Rural Community Network) has completed a review of the implementation of the Act. The main purpose of the review was to evaluate the effectiveness of the support measures put in place by DAERA to assist public authorities with implementing the Act and to review the monitoring and reporting arrangements with a view to identifying any potential improvements that could be made. A copy of the Executive Summary of the Report is attached at **Appendix 2.**
3.3	The Working Group made 25 recommendations covering all aspects of the Rural Needs Act. The six recommendations which are relevant to the Council, set out below, will be taken forward by the Equality & Diversity Unit: • Host regular workshops for internal decision-makers to raise awareness of duty

	• Review resources allocated to supporting the implementation of rural needs • Seek to embed by incorporating compliance with the Act into assurance statements, submission templates and audit and risk procedures; • Seek to develop effective relationships with rural communities organisations • Be open to adopting new and innovative approaches to engaging with the rural community sector • Publish RNIA templates on a single webpage
3.4	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> Officers from across the organisation are involved in completing Rural Needs Impact Assessments and the Equality and Diversity Unit have corporate responsibility for collating this information.
3.5	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The actions outlined contribute to our legal compliance regarding the implementation of the rural needs duty.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return 2019-20 **Appendix 2:** Executive Summary Review of the Implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

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Appendix 2 - Template for Information to be Compiled

Information to be compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

(To be completed and included in public authorities' own annual reports and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report).

Name of Public Authority: Belfast City Council

Reporting Period: **April 20** 19 **to March 20** 20

The following information should be compiled in respect of each policy, strategy and plan which has been developed, adopted, implemented or revised and each public service which has been designed or delivered by the public authority during the reporting period.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016[1].	***The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to[2].***	***Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service[3].***
Corporate CCTV Policy	Internal Facilities Management	No rural needs were identified
Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021	Internal Staff Strategy	No rural needs were identified
Flying of the Rainbow Flag on Pride Day – 3rd August	Inclusion	No rural needs were identified

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016[1].	***The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to[2].***	***Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service[3].***
Development of an open spaces and streetscene structure leading to restructuring of the current Parks and Street Cleansing services	Internal staff process	No rural needs were identified
Waterworks Pitch (Westland)	Sports Development	No rural needs were identified
Corporate Plan 2020/2024	Citywide Plan	No rural needs were identified
Customer Focus Programme 'Putting you first, Transforming Customer Experience'	Delivery of a new Customer Service Strategy	This programme will impact positively on residents living in rural areas
Boodles Dam	Regeneration Project	No rural needs were identified
Open Spaces Street Scene Service	Delivery of a public service	No rural needs were identified. However this will be monitored during implementation
A City Reimaging – Cultural Strategy for Belfast 2020-2030	Regeneration/Tourism	No rural needs were identified
Future City Centre Programme	City Centre Regeneration Scheme	No rural needs were identified
City for Investment Service	Jobs/Employment	No rural needs were identified
Request for a permanent plaque to commemorate world war I nurses	Jobs/Employment	No rural needs were identified
Reservoir Safety Programme	Capital works	No rural needs were identified
Start a Business Activity	Jobs/Employment	No rural needs were identified
Employability and Skills Programme		No rural needs were identified
FinalBelfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan	Regeneration Plan	No rural needs were identified
Final Developer Contributions Framework	Regeneration Framework	No rural needs were identified

This return together with a list of RNIAs will be published on our website and can be accessed here:
http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/council/equality/screening-outcome.aspx

NOTES

1. This information should normally be contained in section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
2. This information should normally be contained in section 2D of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.
3. The information contained in sections 3D, 4A & 5B of the RNIA Template should be considered when completing this section.

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Appendix 2

Executive Summary

The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 places a statutory duty on Northern Ireland departments, district councils and certain other public authorities in Northern Ireland to have due regard to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas in the development, implementation, revision and adoption of policies, strategies and plans and in the design and delivery of public services. The Act came into operation for departments and councils in June 2017 and for the other public authorities listed in the Schedule to the Act in June 2018.

In September 2019 DAERA established a working group to undertake a review of the implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 for the purposes of assessing how the legislation was being implemented by public authorities to date and identifying what further support measures might be introduced to help public authorities comply with the legislation. The Terms of Reference for the review set seven specific objectives for the working group to address as part of the review. In undertaking the review the working group collected evidence from a wide range of public authorities and rural stakeholders in order to ensure that the recommendations resulting from the review were evidence based.

The review found that there continues to be a lack of awareness among some decision makers of the need to comply with the due regard duty and a lack of understanding of among some decision makers as to what a public authority is required to do specifically in order to fulfil the due regard duty. It also found that lack of access to the information necessary to inform decision makers of the needs of people in rural areas was a key barrier to implementing the due regard duty. The review also found that not all decision makers were complying with the guidance on the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 in relation to the carrying out of Rural Needs Impact Assessments and that there was evidence that the completion of a Rural Needs Impact Assessment Template was sometimes being viewed as a 'tick box' exercise;

In seeking to address the findings from the review the working group has made 25 recommendations covering all aspects of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. These include recommendations on increasing awareness of the legislation, new measures to help public authorities comply with the legislation, improving the monitoring and reporting procedures, improving access to statistical information and new measures to facilitate better co-operation between public authorities. A full list of the recommendations is provided at Appendix 1 of the report.

List of Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Public Authority Recommended to Implement
1	It is recommended that DAERA works in partnership with other public authorities to deliver a programme of 'on the ground' and corporate level promotion activities aimed at raising awareness of the due regard duty and of the support and guidance available to decision makers to help them ensure they comply with the due regard duty.	DAERA
2	It is recommended that DAERA develops a suite of new online material specifically on the Rural Need Impact Assessment process and the completion of the RNIA Template and makes this available to all public authorities.	DAERA
3	It is recommended that DAERA develops comprehensive training on the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 and makes this available to those officials within public authorities with responsibility for promoting, supporting and monitoring the implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 based on need.	DAERA
4	It is recommended that DAERA reviews the guidance on the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 with a view to clarifying that where a public authority is satisfied that a Section 1 activity in which it is engaged has no impact, no likely impact and no potential to impact on people in rural areas or their social and economic needs, that public authority may complete its own condensed version of the RNIA Template to document that information and to confirm that it is satisfied that the due regard duty has been fully considered.	DAERA
5	It is recommended that public authorities host regular workshops for decision makers within their organisation (subject to need) for the purposes of increasing awareness	All Public Authorities

	and understanding of the duties on public authorities under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	
6	It is recommended that DAERA creates a dedicated 'Rural Statistics and Information' page on the 'Rural Needs' section of the DAERA website incorporating appropriate links to statistics, research and other useful information (including links to the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service) and contacts for the DAERA rural statistician and other Departmental statisticians groups.	DAERA
7	It is recommended that public authorities review the resources allocated to supporting the implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 with a view to ensuring that rural needs co-ordinators have access to the resources necessary to undertake their role effectively.	All Public Authorities
8	It is recommended that DAERA reviews the structure and content of the 'Rural Needs' section of the DAERA website with a view to making the information more user-friendly and including more information on the Rural Needs Impact Assessment process including, for example, rural statistics, research information, case studies, further guidance and examples of good practice.	DAERA
9	It is recommended that DAERA offers to support one half day workshop on the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 for each public authority annually on request.	DAERA
10	It is recommended that public authorities take steps to seek to embed the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 further within their organisation including, for example, by incorporating compliance with the Act in their Assurance Statements, Submission Templates and Audit and Risk Procedures.	All Public Authorities
11	It is recommended that the DAERA rural statistician participates in the Rural Needs Network.	DAERA

12	It is recommended that research is undertaken to identify examples of rural success stories, positive impacts and lessons learned as a result of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 or rural proofing and that DAERA makes these available on the 'Rural Needs' section of its website.	DAERA
13	It is recommended that public authorities seek to develop effective relationships with rural community organisations and, where appropriate, to seek to engage with the rural community sector in a meaningful and timely manner as part of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment process being undertaken in respect of Section 1 activities.	All Public Authorities
14	It is recommended that public authorities be open to adopting new and innovative approaches to engaging with the rural community sector when seeking to gather information on rural needs including taking measures to engage with people in rural areas who may not normally participate in public consultations or stakeholder engagement.	All Public Authorities
15	It is recommended that DAERA incorporates a rural research hub webpage on the 'Rural Needs' section of its website providing a dedicated space for links to relevant research relating to the needs of people in rural areas to be shared.	DAERA
16	It is recommended that the Agri-food and Bio-Sciences Institute (AFBI) produces a short research briefing document (which provides an overview and summary of the research) as an output of all current and future rural research undertaken by it on behalf of DAERA.	AFBI
17	It is recommended that DAERA shares its 'Rural Needs Database' model with other public authorities following the successful completion of the pilot.	DAERA

18	It is recommended that DAERA offers to provide feedback on the content of annual monitoring returns submitted by public authorities on request.	DAERA
19	It is recommended that DAERA reviews the structure and content of the annual monitoring report with a view to improving its presentation and making the information more meaningful and relevant to stakeholders including through the use of indexing, the use of narrative rather than tabular format, the use of infographics (where appropriate) and the provision of linkages to RNIA Templates on public authorities' own websites (where available).	DAERA
20	It is recommended that public authorities publish their RNIA Templates on their website on a single webpage and that the annual monitoring report includes a link to each public authority's webpage.	All Public Authorities
21	It is recommended that, if a suitable opportunity arises, DAERA should seek to amend Section 3 of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 to remove the requirement to publish the same comprehensive information in both a public authority's Annual Report and Accounts and in the annual monitoring report which is required to be published by DAERA.	DAERA
22	It is recommended that DAERA establishes a Rural Needs Network open to all public authorities listed in the Schedule to the Act for the purposes of facilitating co-operation and the exchange of information between public authorities (including DAERA), promoting best practice across public authorities and providing a forum for Rural Needs Coordinators to raise and discuss issues relating to rural needs, including engagement with the rural community sector.	DAERA
23	It is recommended that the Rural Needs Network meets formally on a biannual basis and that following its establishment, the network would explore options for networking on an ongoing basis outside of the formal process, including options using technology.	DAERA

24	It is recommended that DAERA should consider adding the following organisations to the Schedule to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 when undertaking its review of the list of bodies and persons set out in the Schedule as required under Section 1(3) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016: - Northern Ireland Water - The Northern Ireland Transport Company - Waterways Ireland	DAERA
25	It is recommended that DAERA engages with members of the Rural Needs Working Group when undertaking the review of the list of bodies and persons in the Schedule under Section 1(3) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.	DAERA

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Belfast City Council response to the Housing Executive's Draft Older People's Housing Strategy 2020/21 – 2025/26
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Christine Robinson, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships Manager Mark Mulholland, Policy and Performance Analyst

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the submission of a corporate response to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE) draft Older People's Housing Strategy 2020/21- 2025/25 (Appendix 1).
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is, therefore, asked to: a) note the content of the corporate response to the NIHE draft Older People's Housing Strategy 2020/21 – 2025/26 (Appendix 2); b) Approve the submission of the corporate response to NIHE, if approval granted by SP&R on 18 September 2020, it will be submitted on a holding basis subject to approval by Council, to meet the submission deadline of 25 September 2020.

3.0	**Main report**
3.1	In February, the Housing Executive's Board approved the draft Older People's Housing Strategy 2020/21 – 2025/26. Subsequently the Housing Executive have undertaken an external consultation exercise to seek feedback on the strategic direction the organisation has set out in the document.
3.2	The Strategy strongly supports the NIHE commitment to continue to work with existing partners and stakeholders to maximise and complement our contribution to improving housing related services for older people. This includes statutory and voluntary organisations, health and social care trusts, local councils and community planning partners.
3.3	The NIHE requested that responses provided focus in particular on the four strategic themes set out in the strategy and the accompanying high level action plans. The four high level themes are: 1. Planning for the future; 2. Promoting and maintaining people's dignity; 3. Providing housing advice for older people; and 4. Promoting participation
3.4	The corporate response follows the structure of the draft strategy issued by the NIHE. This response encompasses input from colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services, Place and Economy, Civic and Legal Services and Resilience. It also reflects input from the Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership and members of the All Party Older People's Group.
3.5	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.6	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Draft Older People's Housing Strategy 2020/21 – 2025/26 Appendix 2 – Corporate response to Older People's Housing Strategy 2020/21 – 2025/26

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Older People's Housing Strategy 2020/21-2025/26

Housing Executive

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Table of Contents

1.0 Foreword 4
Equality Statement 6
2.0 Our Vision for Older People 6
Introduction 11
Housing Executive Research 12
3.0 Strategic Context 14
4.0 Older People's Housing Strategy 31
Theme 1: Planning for the Future 32
1. Exploring Housing Options for Older People 33
2. Supporting Independent Living 43
Theme 2 - Promoting and Maintaining People's Dignity 52
Theme 3 - Housing Advice for Older People 58
Theme 4 - Promoting Participation 63
Appendix 1 List of Useful Documents/Web Pages 68

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We can let you have a copy of the plans in a language that meets your needs and in different formats.

1.0 Foreword

Over the next 25 years, Northern Ireland will see a significant increase in both the overall number and the percentage of older people within the population. This will have implications for the type of services that we deliver, along with increasing pressures on social and healthcare provision. Therefore, this draft Older People's Housing Strategy has been developed to ensure that our services evolve in response to the projected growth in the number of older people in Northern Ireland.

The Housing Executive is both a landlord with over 85,000 homes, and the Regional Housing Authority for Northern Ireland. In the latter role we need to understand the dynamics of change in the population and seek to promote active housing stock management. Such an approach would benefit older people and other members of the community through ensuring that people live in homes best suited to their needs.

It is also important that we explore flexible housing solutions, which allow people to transition from one type of housing to another in later life, as their circumstances dictate. These solutions can range from being able to 'age in place' with the assistance of adaptations to the home and/or care support, to helping to downsize to other accommodation, including sheltered housing and extra-care housing. The collaboration of a number of service providers will be essential to create places where older people feel safe and connected to their community, helping to prevent loneliness and isolation.

To draft this Strategy, we have used our recent research 'Housing and Older People: Issues, Needs and Aspirations' alongside other contemporary resources. We have also used our knowledge and experience of housing related issues that may impact older people. The draft Strategy is set out under the following four key themes:

1. Planning for the future: Under this theme there are two distinct strands: Exploring Housing Options for Older People, which looks at different housing models; and Supporting Independent Living, which looks at ways to assist those who can and wish to remain in their own home;

2. Promoting and Maintaining Dignity: This theme sets out the services we currently provide and looks at ways to develop new and existing services to promote and maintain the dignity of our tenants and customers;

3. Providing Housing Advice for Older People: In this theme we set out a direction to help us explore and develop new and existing housing information and advisory services, and how we can deliver these using a range of formats and methods; and

4. Promoting Participation: Under this theme we recognise how engaging, enabling and empowering older people actively to participate in community life can have positive impacts on their health, wellbeing and happiness. Loneliness can have a severe detrimental impact on all age groups, including older people, and we will work in partnership with others to support opportunities for older people to become involved in shaping, informing and enjoying the services that we deliver on their behalf.

We already work with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community-based partners and stakeholders to deliver an impressive range of housing related services. These partnership arrangements have allowed us to serve the needs of our tenants, customers and communities more efficiently and effectively. Partnership working will be a key component in delivering places and services that provide age friendly environments where older people can continue to thrive.

We welcome and encourage comments on this draft Older People's Housing Strategy which may help us better to plan, deliver and respond to housing related issues that could impact on older people now and in the future.

Should you wish to participate in this consultation, a copy of the Strategy document is available on our website or can be made available upon request at the following address. https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Partners/Consultations

Consultation ends on Friday 25th September 2020 and consultation responses should be directed to business.performance@nihe.gov.uk or via writing to:

John Goudy
Corporate Business Planning & Performance
5th Floor Housing Centre
2 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT1 8PB
Tel: 028 959 82498

Professor Peter Roberts, Chair

Clark Bailie, Chief Executive

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Equality Statement

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Housing Executive to comply with Section 75 (1). This states that, in carrying out our function, we are required to have due regard to promote the equality of opportunity between various groups, including 'age'.

This strategy has been Equality Screened and a copy of this can be made available on request.

2.0 Our Vision for Older People

Our vision is 'to enable older people to live as independently as possible with dignity; with opportunities and options to meet their housing needs; and to be supported to engage and participate in community life to create vibrant sustainable communities.'

Why developing an Older People's Housing Strategy is important

The population of Northern Ireland is becoming increasingly older. For example, the number of citizens aged 65 years or older has increased by over 25% in the last 25 years and now makes up some 16% of the total population. Between mid-2017 and June 2018, the proportion of people in the population aged over 85 years rose by 1.5% to 37,700 with this group alone having grown by over 30% in the last 10 years. It is now projected that, by 2041, the number of people aged 85 years or older will more than double to over 82,000. And, by 2028, the number of people aged over 65 years is projected to outnumber those aged under 16 years of age.

This increase in the number of older people is attributed to improving standards in healthcare, leading to higher survival rates. At the same time, there has also been a marked downward trend in births. However, these key demographic trends present some fundamental societal challenges with continuing pressure on public services to provide care and support for a growing, older population but with a declining working age population, even allowing for potential new entrants through migration. This raises significant issues, including labour availability and resourcing, especially government's ability to raise funding through taxes paid by those in work. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) 'World Report on Ageing and Health'[1] stated that "failure to adapt to demographic change will result in high costs to society". Greater investment in areas such as age-friendly environments have demonstrated a range of benefits to the individual in terms of health, skills and knowledge, mobility, social connectivity, financial security and personal dignity, safety and security. These in

[1] http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/333702/AFEE-tool.pdf?ua=1

turn may generate positive returns to society in terms of the individuals wellbeing, workforce participation, social and cultural contribution and social cohesion.

In recent years, the challenges that will arise as a result of an ageing population are increasingly being recognised across various sectors of society in Northern Ireland. There is increased acknowledgement that society needs to be able to meet the needs and aspirations that older people have, now, and in the future, in order for them to carry on living to their fullest potential. At the time of developing this strategy, a number of key reports, conferences and seminars at both local and a national level have focused on the challenges of an ageing population, including those challenges from housing and planning perspectives

Our Older People's Strategy is also based on, and aims to complement, the themes detailed in the Executive Office's 'Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021'[2] which is designed to "make a real difference to the quality of life of older people and to enable as many people as possible to enjoy the benefits and rewards of life for as long as possible".

Recognising this shift in demography, the Housing Executive commissioned research to support and inform our decision making in relation to how best to plan and deliver appropriate housing for older people in Northern Ireland. This research was published in late 2019. In addition to this, in tandem with developing this strategy, we have consulted both with the Housing Executive's Consultative Forum on Equality and with senior representatives from the office of the Commission for Older People in Northern Ireland.

In 2016, the World Health Organisation (WHO) produced a report aimed at policy-makers and planners to develop age-friendly policies and interventions across the physical environment, transport and housing.[3] The WHO report notes that whilst the development of age-friendly environments primarily focuses on the needs of older people, there are simultaneous benefits for other age groups.

"For example, barrier free physical environments will ultimately benefit parents with prams, well designed homes can be more easily adapted to meet people's needs as they age and being part of a vibrant, connected and safe community will ultimately benefit all tenants and residents regardless of their age".[4]

This is perhaps more pertinent now as a substantial number of families contain four living generations, and, for example, a 65 year old may now provide support and care not only for their parents, but also for their grandchildren.

[2] https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ofmdfm/active-ageing-strategy.pdf
[3] http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/333702/AFEE-tool.pdf?ua=1
[4] http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/333702/AFEE-tool.pdf?ua=1

What our Strategy aims to achieve

Our Strategy takes into account the changing demography of Northern Ireland, including that of our own tenant profile, and aims to ensure that the services, policies, initiatives and activities that we deliver consider and meet the needs of our ageing population.

The Housing Executive is focused on improving and positively impacting a range of housing related services under our three corporate high level themes of People, Property and Places. We do, however, recognise that addressing these challenges cannot be carried out by the Housing Executive acting alone and we will continue to work with existing partners and stakeholders to maximise and complement our contribution to improving services for older people. This includes statutory and voluntary organisations, health and social care trusts, local councils and community planning partners. There is a huge opportunity to build on this and we believe that through a partnership approach, resources can be directed more effectively, organisations can work more collaboratively, and outcomes can be more meaningful.

We have developed our Strategy, and high level action plan, for a five year planning horizon covering the period from 2020/21 – 2025/26. Each year we will update and publish a more detailed annual action plan, based on a realistic assessment of our progress in the previous year and to take account of any new or emerging trends. We will baseline, track our services, and measure any improvements against a range of our services that are directly or indirectly targeted at older people. This includes the opportunity to conduct more research if deemed appropriate.

The Strategy also seeks to knit together the range of existing activities that we currently deliver for older people and outlines our plans to develop and deliver new services and initiatives under four broad themes. These themes are:

1. Planning for the future;

2. Promoting and maintaining people's dignity;

3. Providing housing advice for older people; and

4. Promoting participation.

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Defining an 'older person'

Older People are not a homogenous group and there is no stereotypical older person. Indeed, some people aged 60 years or older may be fitter, healthier and more active than many people younger than them.

The concept of 'old age' is therefore not simple or straightforward, with various organisations, charities or government departments all citing different definitions of 'old age'.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) uses both 65 and 85 years of age as key milestones when reporting on demographics and population projections. The Housing Executive's annual Continuous Tenant Omnibus Surveys reports on tenants within both the 60-64 age range and the 65 years or older age range. Recently published Housing Executive research captured housing needs, aspirations and preferences of those aged 55 years or older.

The social housing waiting list (Common Waiting List) data categorises applicants aged 60 years or older as 'elderly'. The Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland considers 60 years or more as the defining criterion for an 'older person' and in Northern Ireland social benefits such as free bus travel and concessions on public transport commence at 60 years of age.

Whilst there would not appear to be a commonly accepted or universal definition of an older person, for the purposes of this strategy we will use 60 years or older when we refer to an 'older person'. However, this will be applied flexibly to allow the strategy to use a wide range of sources across a number of definitions. Indeed, when planning for the future, it is pertinent to look at the range of research and demographics available, including those who have not yet reached the 'older' or 'elderly' milestones of 60 years plus, or 65 years or older. Those who are aged 55 or older are within the 'active ageing' category and may be considered as part of future demographic need.

How will we know we were successful?

By the end of the Strategy, we will have:

- explored a range of housing options for older people, leading to better planning decisions in relation to new models for the future;
- supported people to remain in their homes where appropriate;
- provided support and assistance to help older people to live with dignity in an attractive and safe home and community environment;
- gained a better understanding of the needs of our older customers and continued to develop and deliver a range of housing advice and services to meet those needs;
- built on existing and provided new opportunities for older people to participate, shape and become actively involved in their communities;

- worked with partners and stakeholders to design and deliver more and better integrated services;
- mapped and analysed population trends on an ongoing basis to ensure that our services have kept pace with demographic changes;
- measured and tracked how well we have delivered our activities over the period of the strategy through regular progress updates; and
- identified further areas for research, as necessary.

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Introduction

Northern Ireland is an ageing society with almost one in six people aged 65 or older according to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 2016 mid-year estimates. This number has increased by 26.3% in the last 25 years. The number of those aged 85 years or older has shown an even more dramatic increase and is projected to more than double by 2041 to over 82,000.[5]

Many older people have spent large portions of their lives working and contributing to the development and improvement of Northern Ireland across all sectors. Some continue to work while others have made invaluable 'community contributions' by raising their own families, and, in many cases, supporting children and relatives through, often unpaid, care or childcare support.

Many also contribute significantly through volunteering, involvement in charities and by being active in the community across a range of initiatives and activities. In financial terms older people in Northern Ireland are expected to contribute the equivalent value of some £25 billion to the economy over the next 50 years through volunteering, caring, childcare, replacement parenting and working.[6]

There are, however, a number of significant challenges that face older people including deteriorating health with conditions such as dementia, or through disability. One of the greatest challenges that we face as a society is ensuring that there is an adequate supply and choice of safe and secure housing appropriate to the diverse needs of an ageing population with good transport links and infrastructure in place to create and sustain vibrant communities.

Of course ensuring an adequate supply of suitable housing is not only about building or securing more units of accommodation, as many people wish to remain in their own home. It is very much a societal issue and requires co-operation and partnership working across a range of government departments, statutory bodies, charities and volunteers along with input from older people. We work and will continue to work with a range of organisations in order to maximise the impact that we can have at a grass roots level on our estates and within our communities, as well as with statutory bodies and government departments at a strategic level.

This strategy not only outlines new high level objectives specifically for housing, it also aims to bring strands from our other strategies together, setting out our services for older people and our high level actions for the years ahead. See Appendix 1 for details.

[5] https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2016-based-population-projections-areas-within-northern-ireland
[6] https://www.copni.org/news/2014/september/older-people-in-northern-ireland-set-to-contribute-247-billion-to-economy-over-the-next-50-years

Housing Executive Research

In 2018 the Housing Executive commissioned research entitled 'Older People: Housing Issues, Aspirations and Needs'. The purpose of this research was to support and inform decision making in relation to appropriate housing for older people in Northern Ireland, through qualitative insights on the views of internal Housing Executive Stakeholders (16 respondents), external stakeholders (21 respondents) and older people themselves (57 respondents). Older people were grouped into three broad cohorts. Those aged 55-69 years, those aged 70-84 years and those aged 85 years or older.

The primary aims of the research were to:

- explore the needs, aspirations and preferences of different cohorts of older people in relation to housing options;
- identify planning actions by housing providers and representative organisations in order to meet the future housing needs and aspirations of older people;
- collate data on what existing accommodation is available in relation to the distribution of the older people population across Northern Ireland; and
- ascertain levels of future housing need in relation to the same.

A number of findings and recommendations were presented. Some of these were specific to housing and others are much broader and would require exploration by the appropriate bodies. The fulfilment of these aspirational recommendations are dependent on a number of critical factors including funding and partnership working across a range of agencies, however broadly represent the views expressed from the sample size of respondents through the qualitative research outlined above.

Some key findings outlined were:

- defining old age is not a simple task as people's personal circumstances including housing, health, mobility and wealth can vary greatly, within, and between various age bands;
- older people are more likely to be living in an owner occupied dwelling, own their home outright, live in a home built before 1919 and be more likely to be in fuel poverty;
- There are non-housing specific factors that can act as barriers for older people to remaining in the same accommodation such as their health, isolation and loneliness, mobility, loss of partner and lack of family support;
- Feedback from focus group participants indicated that their preference was to remain living in their current accommodation rather than moving;
- There are numerous support measures to help support people to remain in their current home;

- The delivery of housing and housing related services and community based advice and support for older people is a key role for a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies; and
- Housing needs and aspirations of older people are multiple and complex and their expectations are increasing.

The research findings have been used to help shape and inform this Strategy. Details of the research can be found on our website at www.nihe.gov.uk . Other research that helped to inform this Strategy included The All Party Parliamentary Group Report on Decent and Accessible Homes for Older People[7] and the World Health Organisation's report on 'Creating age-friendly environments in Europe – A tool for local policy-makers and planners'.[8]

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[7] https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/politics-and-government/all-party-parliamentary-group/
[8] http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/333702/AFEE-tool.pdf?ua=1

3.0 Strategic Context

In writing this document there are a number of strategic factors to be taken into account including the Draft Programme for Government, The Executive Office's Active Ageing Strategy, our own Corporate Plan, other government legislation, demographics and other societal issues.

Draft Programme for Government 2016-21

The Draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2016-21 provides the highest level strategic document of the Executive Office in Northern Ireland. The draft Framework contains 12 strategic outcomes which set a clear direction of travel and enable continuous improvement on essential components of societal wellbeing. There are 49 indicators across the 12 strategic outcomes. Good quality housing and housing services have a key role to play in the successful delivery of some of these outcomes.

The Housing Executive directly contributes to Outcome 8, "We care for others and help those in need", and Outcome 11, "We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure". We also have the opportunity to influence Outcome 2, "We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment" and Outcome 7, "We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other".

At the time of writing, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Tánaiste in the Republic of Ireland published the 'New Decade, New Approach'[9] document which outlines the priorities for the Northern Ireland Executive. We await further details of any new and relevant Programme for Government outcomes and indicators and we will factor these recommendations into our annual action plans where appropriate.

Active Ageing Strategy 2016-21

The Executive Office's Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021 aims to transform attitudes to, and services for older people. It aims to increase the understanding of the issues affecting older people and promotes an emphasis on rights, value and contributions as opposed to needs, costs and burdens. There are five strategic aims - Independence, Participation, Care, Self-fulfilment and Dignity. Again, housing and housing services have a key role to play in the realisation of these. The outcomes that we can help to influence are:

- Suitable warm housing;
- Promoting community safety and tackling fear of crime;
- User-friendly information;
- Address isolation and loneliness;
- Participation of older people in decision making and the provision of services;

[9]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade__a_new_approach.pdf

- Support and promote the health and wellbeing of people as they get older;
- Training and leisure opportunities; and
- Respecting older people's dignity.

In late 2019 the Department for Communities conducted a Mid-Term Review of the Active Ageing Strategy to measure progress against the Strategy's aims and identify what has been delivered against the action plan. The Housing Executive has contributed positively to a number of these to date including:

- Delivering the Affordable Warmth Scheme, on behalf of DfC, which by the end of the 2018/19 year had provided 6,063 energy efficiency measures to 3,205 homes. Over 59% of these homes were occupied by a person aged over 65 years;
- We managed the SHDP with Housing Associations achieving 1,786 Social Housing Development Programme starts (this provides social housing in Northern Ireland). Of these 5% were wheelchair accessible and 266 were for older people;
- Providing approximately £72m support through the Supporting People Programme of which older people are one of the four thematic groups; and
- Working towards reducing the length of time it takes for major adaptations to be completed within 52 weeks or less by the end of 2020/21.

Our Corporate Plan 2017/18-2020/21

The Housing Executive's Corporate Plan outlines our high level delivery objectives for the period covered by the plan. It uses four high level outcomes related to housing and other services. They are:

1. Helping people find housing support and solutions;
2. Delivering better homes;
3. Fostering vibrant sustainable communities; and
4. Delivering quality public services.

These outcomes are things that people can identify with such as finding suitable accommodation, improving the quality of people's homes or living in a sustainable community and are intended to guide our work over a longer period of time.

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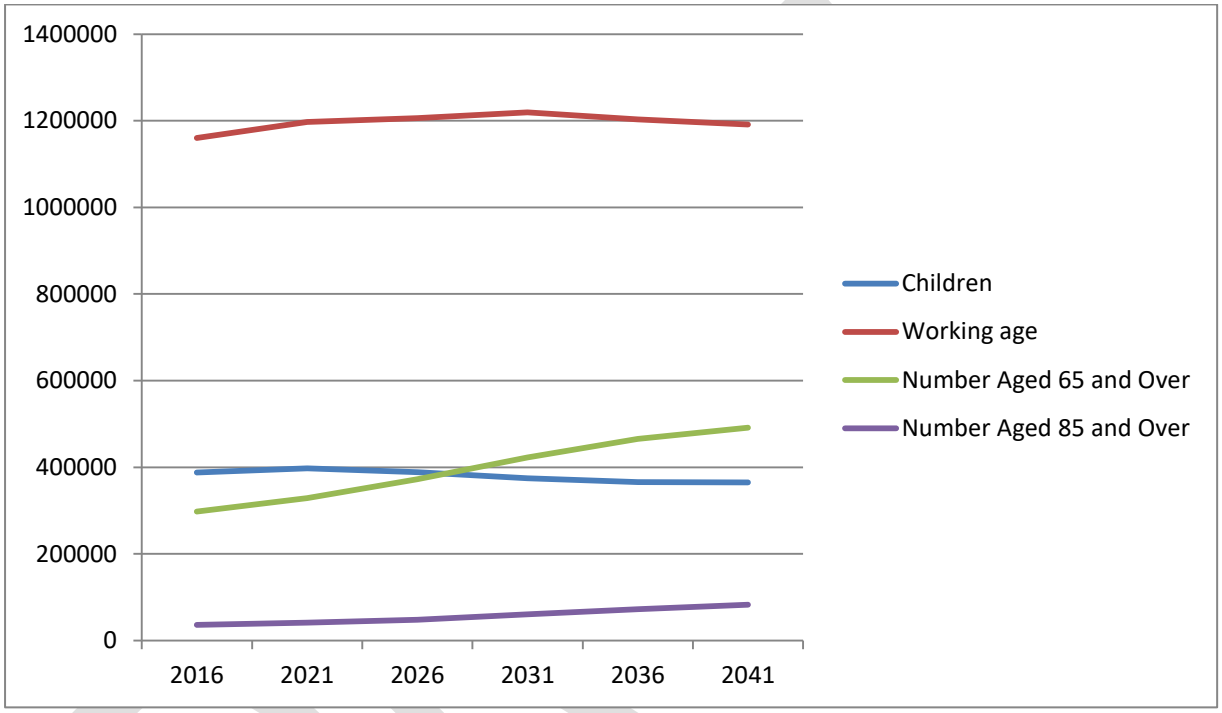
Demographic Changes

As previously outlined the population of Northern Ireland is becoming increasingly older. Improving survival rates, coupled with a general downward trend in the number of births, has resulted in a higher percentage of older people compared to the total population percentage. By 2028[10] the older population (65 years or older) is projected to surpass the number of younger people in Northern Ireland for the first time (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Northern Ireland population projection from Mid-2016 to Mid-2041
(Source: NISRA)



[10] https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/2016-based%20Population%20Projections%20-%20statistical%20bulletin.pdf

The 'population pyramid' (Chart 1a, below) depicts the estimated population of Northern Ireland in mid-2020 by gender and by 5 year age brackets and also depicts the projected demographics of Northern Ireland in 2045.

Chart 1a: Population Pyramid projections, 2020 – 2045
(Source: NISRA)

The grey line indicates the current estimated population and the blue and orange coloured bars highlight population projections in 2045. There is projected to be a reduction in younger people as a whole, a reduction in working age females and an overall increase of people over 65.

Whilst living a longer life is an indicator of improved living standards, improved lifestyle and greater access to quality healthcare services, there are key issues that impact on housing and caring for an ageing population. While it is projected that a greater number of older women than men will be living alone in 2041[11], the 'gender gap' is projected to lessen in the next 25 years. This is due to life expectancy changes between males and females, and could influence individual's choices for future housing to accommodate their different needs.

It should be noted that projections are subject to change and there are other factors affecting population size such as inward and outward migration which may impact this projection.

[11] https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=12&ved=2ahUKEwjm1q7Zn-flAhUKiVwKHUHyAmIQFjALegQIAxAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nisra.gov.uk%2Fsites%2Fnisra.gov.uk%2Ffiles%2Fpublications%2FHHP16_Figures.xls&usg=AOvVaw3gE_JuXhVIYHyZgVXyYtHM

Chart 2: Northern Ireland Projected Percentage Change 2016 – 2041 for those aged 65 years or older. (Those aged 85 or older are a subset of those aged 65 or older and projected numbers are detailed on the graph)
(Source: NISRA)

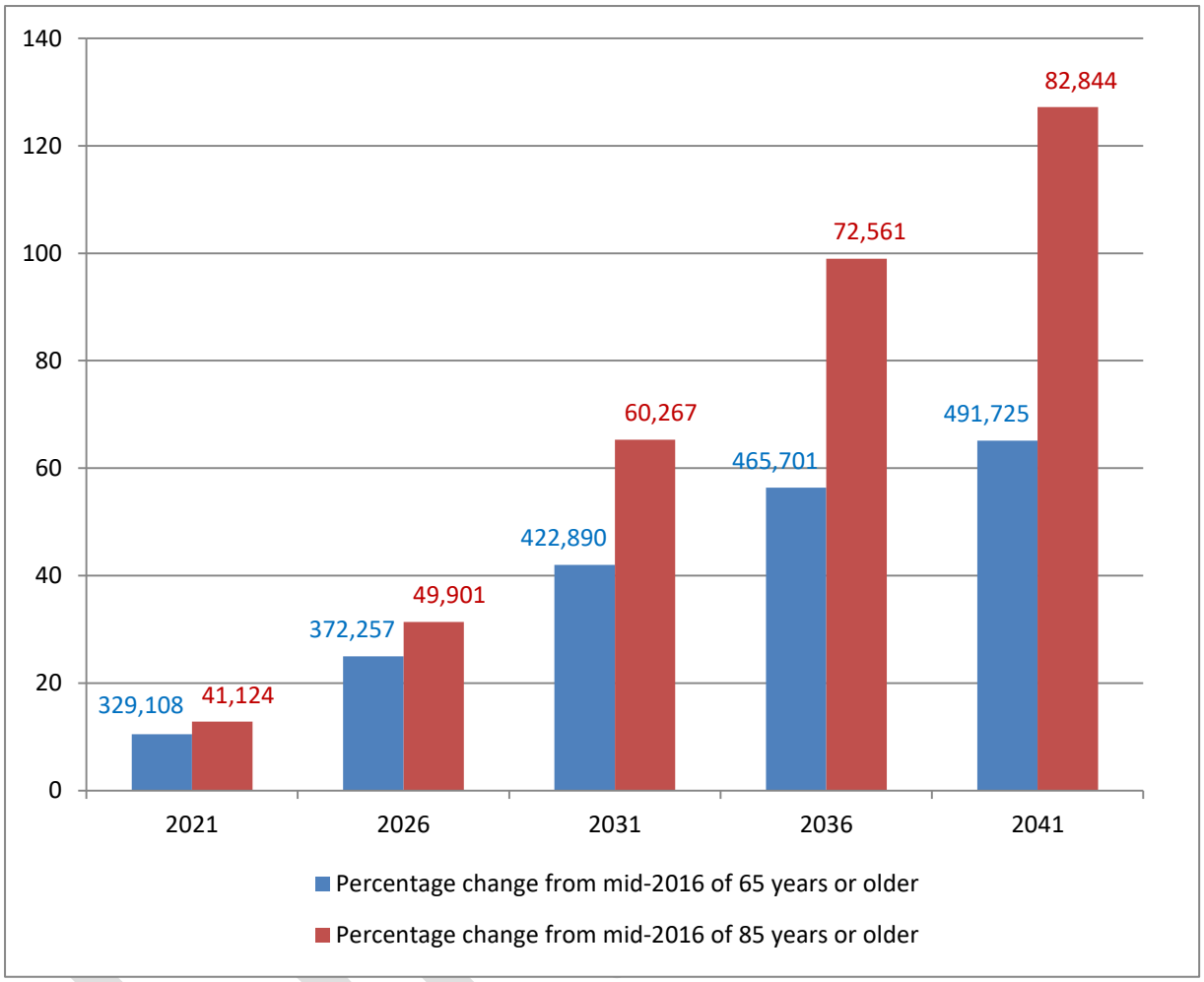
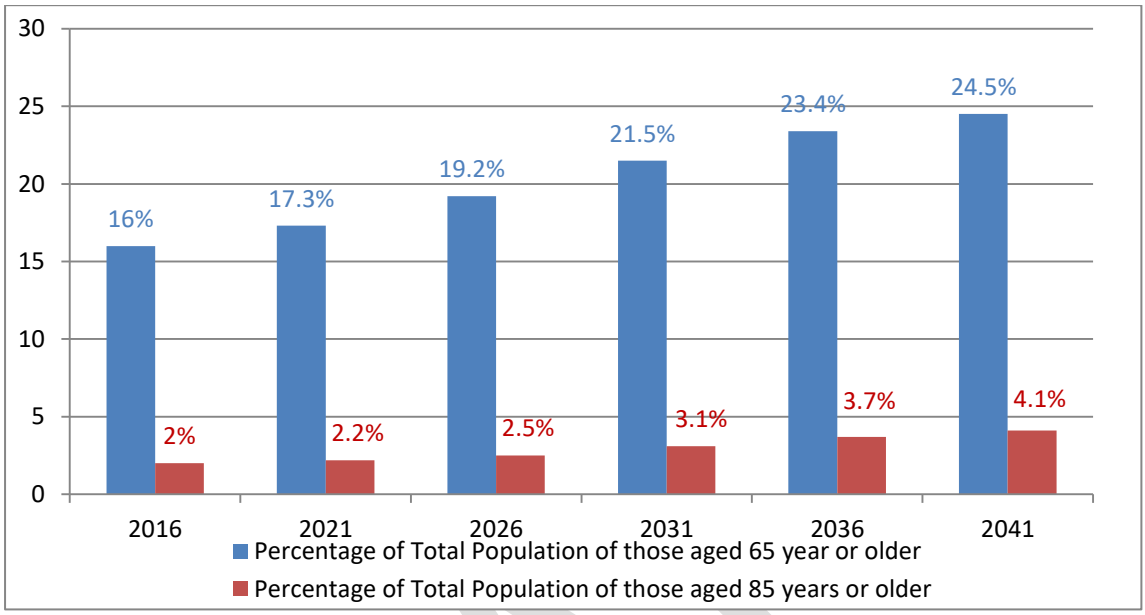


Chart 2 (above) shows the projected percentage change of those over 65 and the projected numbers of those against the 2016 baseline.

Whilst the percentage of those aged 65 years or older is steadily increasing , the percentage of those aged 85 or older, (a subset of those aged 65 or older) is rapidly increasing and by 2041 it is projected that there will be an increase of 127% of people aged 85 years or older.

Chart 3: Northern Ireland projected percentage of population 2016 - 2041 for those aged 65 years and 85 year or older

(Source: NISRA)



Source: *NISRA*

Chart 3 shows that by 2041 it is projected that almost one quarter (24.5%) of the total population will be aged 65+ (See Chart 3)

Demographic projections are useful when planning for the future. Projections and numbers can vary widely at a local level. Analysing and understanding these can help inform the adequate supply and delivery of housing related services for the future. The following three maps below depict trends of people aged 65 year or older over time across Northern Ireland.

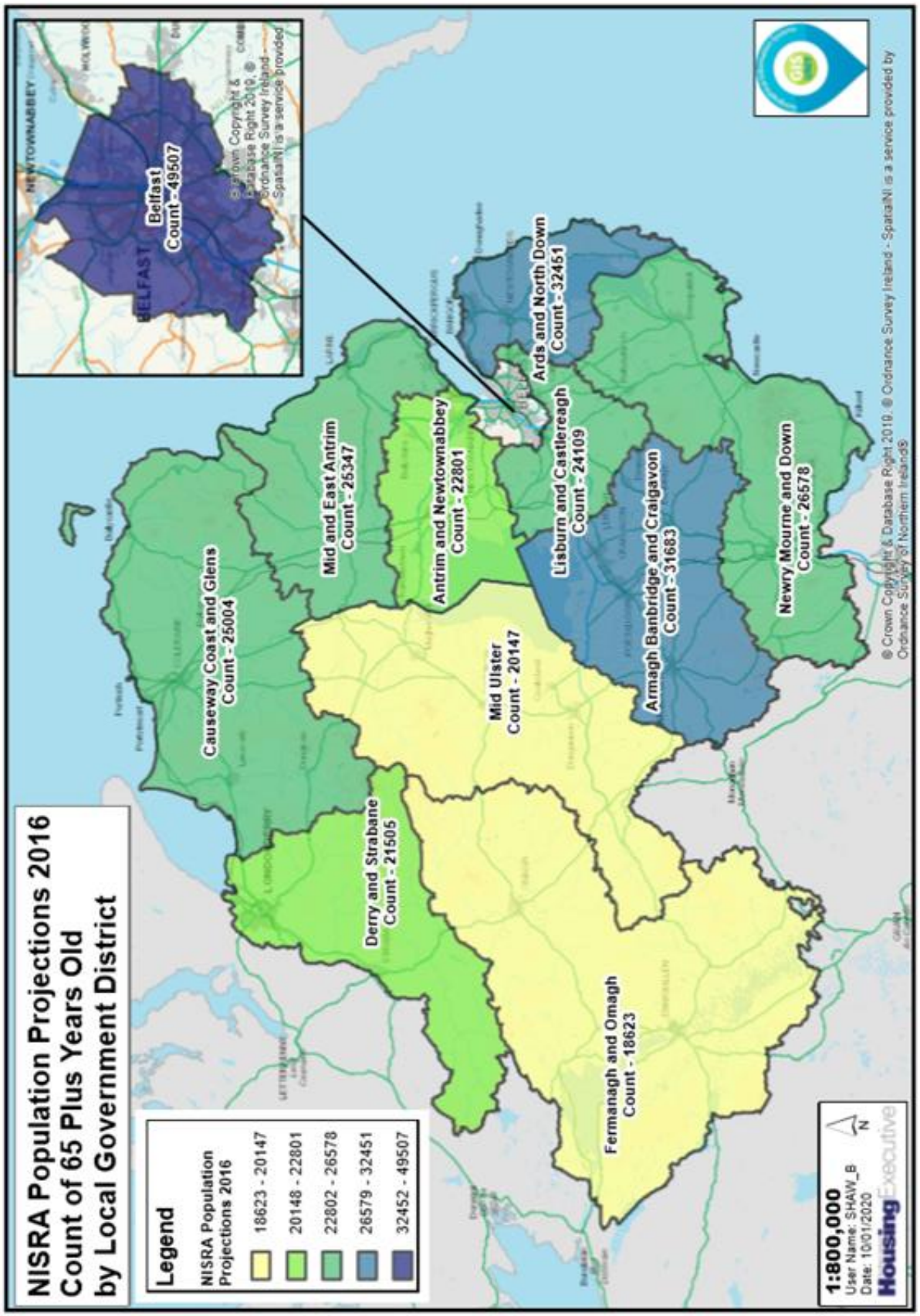
Map 1 shows the number of people aged 65 years or older, broken down by Local Government District (LGD). The yellow and green colours show lower numbers of those aged 65 years or older based on mid-year 2016 estimates.

Map 2 shows the projected percentage change of over 65s from 2016 to 2028.

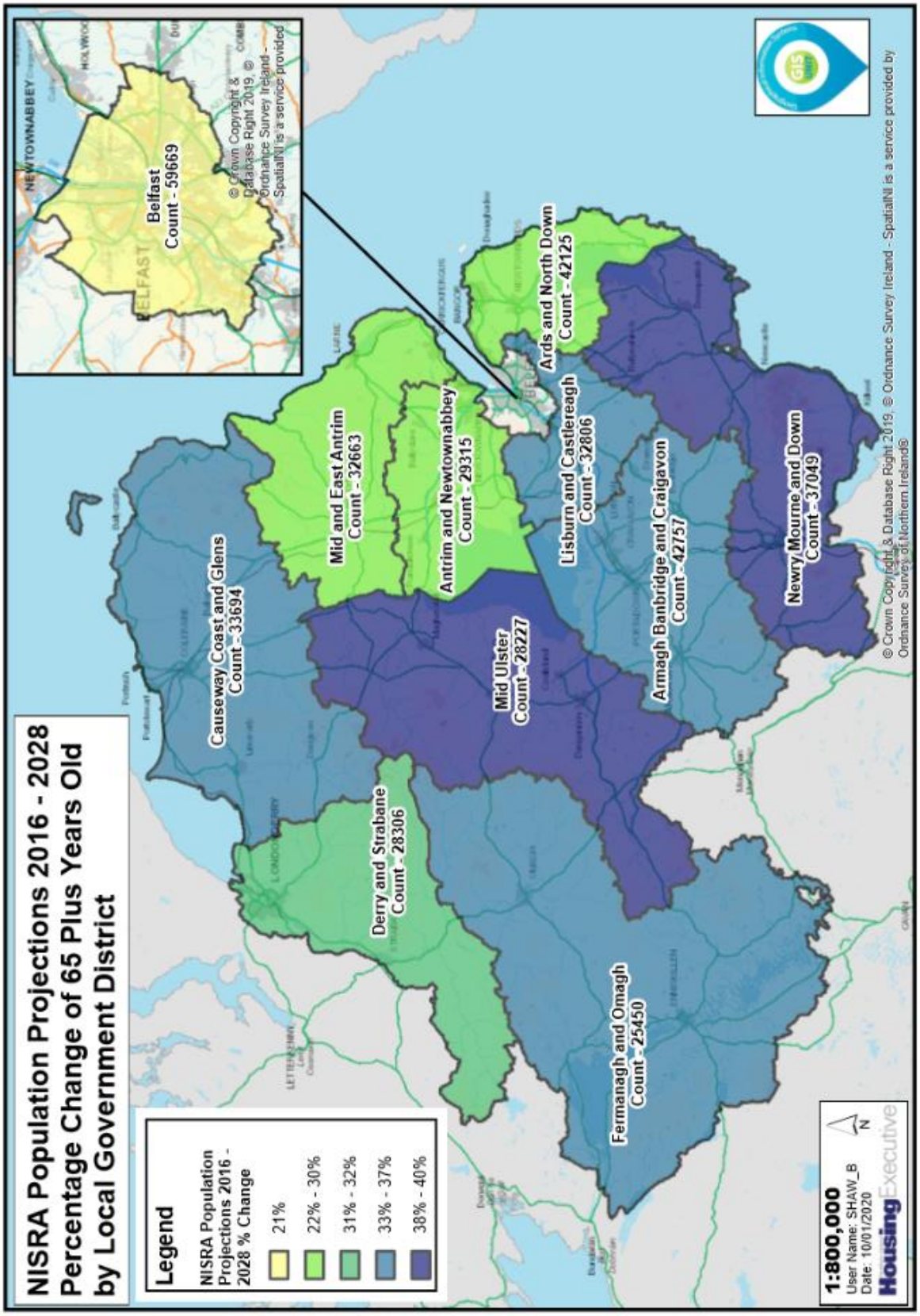
Map 3 shows the projected percentage change of over 65's from 2016 to 2041 based on 2016 mid-year estimates.

- Yellow and green colours show lower projected percentage changes;
- All areas have a projected change of over 65s by at least 20% rising to over 33% in approximately two thirds of LGD's;
- By 2028 it is projected that Mid Ulster and Newry Mourne and Down LGD's population of over 65's will both see the largest projected increases of over 65s with both council areas projected to experience a 40% increase.

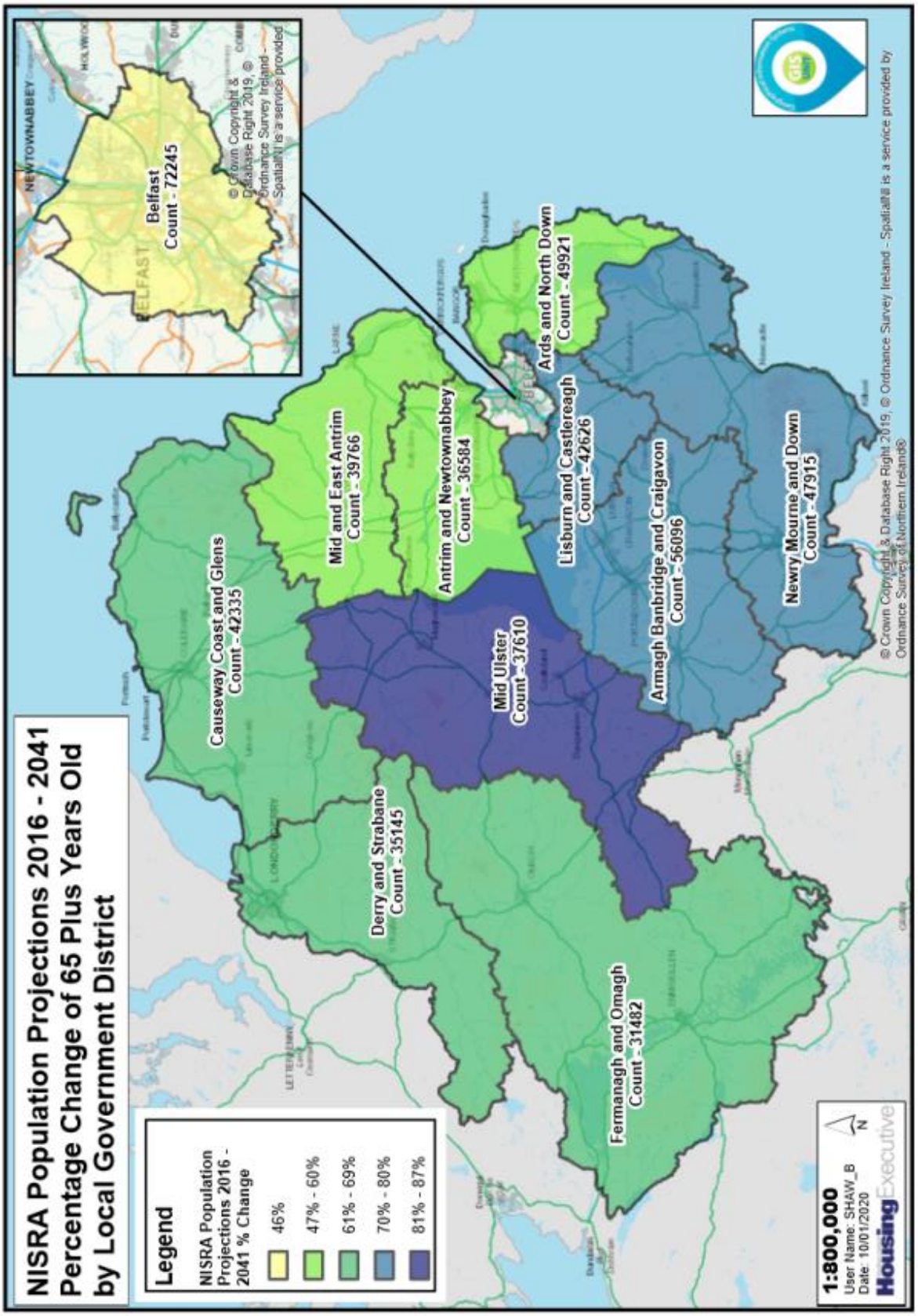
Map 1 – Numbers of 65+ by Local Government District (LGD), based on 2016 mid-year estimates.
(Source: NISRA)



Map 2 - Projected percentage change of over 65s across all LGDs from 2016 to 2028 (the year the number of older people are projected to surpass the number of younger people) based on 2016 mid-year estimates.
(Source: NISRA)



Map 3 - Projected percentage change of over 65s across all LGDs from 2016 to 2041 based on 2016 mid-year estimates.
(Source: NISRA)



Key points to note are:

- All LGDs, with the exception of Belfast City Council, are projected to see an increase of 50% or higher over 65s by 2041;
- Four LGDs have projected increases of over 65s by 75% or more;
- The highest of these is Mid Ulster with 87%;
- In 2016 Mid Ulster had lowest number of over 65s across all council areas but is projected to have the highest percentage in both 2028 and 2041.

Whilst Map 2 and 3 show the projected percentage changes of over 65's across all LGD's, the table below outlines the projected change in over 65s as a percentage of each LGD.

- Mid Ulster is the LGD set to see the greatest projected percentage increase of over 65s between 2016 and 2041however by 2041 22% of Mid Ulster is projected to be over 65 which is the second lowest across all LGDs, with the exception of Belfast;
- Ards & North Down and Causeway LGDs are projected to have the highest percentage of over 65s by 2041, both over 30% and some of the highest projected percentage increases across the 2016-2041 period.

Table 1 below shows projected population changes for younger (0-15 years), working age (16-64 years) and older (65+ years) groups by LGD.

- It is projected that by 2041, the number of those over 65 years will outnumber the number of people under 16 years in all LGDs and at a national level;
- All LGDs in Northern Ireland are projected to see increases of older people both by numbers and as a percentage of all residents within the LGD by 2041; and
- In all but four of the LGDs (the number of people at working age (16-64 years) at 2041 is projected to be lower than at 2016 mid-year estimates.

Taking account of demography at national and local levels is important to ensure that efforts and resources are appropriately directed to meet the needs of an ageing population.

Table 1: Projected Population Changes by LGD, 2016-2041
(Source: NISRA)

Local Government District (LGD)		2016	2028	2041
Antrim & Newtownabbey	0-15 Years	29,648	27,948	26,253
	16-64 Years	88,583	88,363	84,028
	65+ Years	22,801	29,315	36,584
Ards & North Down	0-15 Years	29,983	28,021	25,934
	16-64 Years	97,159	93,708	87,079
	65+ Years	32,451	42,125	49,921
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	0-15 Years	46,804	48,635	49,316
	16-64 Years	131,773	140,714	146,209
	65+ Years	31,683	42,757	56,096
Belfast	0-15 Years	66,953	67,304	64,381
	16-64 Years	223,119	220,398	216,654
	65+ Years	49,507	59,669	72,245
Causeway	0-15 Years	28,555	26,541	23,368
	16-64 Years	89,966	85,103	76,508
	65+ Years	25,004	33,694	42,335
Derry & Strabane	0-15 Years	32,806	31,050	28,039
	16-64 Years	95,831	90,650	82,668
	65+ Years	21,505	28,306	35,145
Fermanagh & Omagh	0-15 Years	24,992	23,706	21,971
	16-64 Years	72,184	70,426	66,684
	65+ Years	18,623	25,450	31,482
Lisburn & Castlereagh	0-15 Years	28,181	29,083	29,100
	16-64 Years	88,891	93,988	96,165
	65+ Years	24,109	32,806	42,626
Mid & East Antrim	0-15 Years	26,361	25,098	23,525
	16-64 Years	86,113	84,060	79,095
	65+ Years	25,347	32,663	39,766
Mid Ulster	0-15 Years	33,531	34,218	33,876
	16-64 Years	91,711	96,794	99,089
	65+ Years	20,147	28,227	37,610
Newry, Mourne & Down	0-15 Years	40,187	40,477	39,612
	16-64 Years	111,051	112,990	112,118
	65+ Years	26,578	37,049	47,915
Northern Ireland	0-15 Years	388,001	382,081	365,375
	16-64 Years	1,176,381	1,177,194	1,146,297
	65+ Years	297,755	392,061	491,725

Housing and Homelessness Applications for social homes

At March 2019 there were around 37,850 applicants on the social housing waiting list grouped under six broad household size headings of: Single; Small Family; Large Family; Small Adult Family; Large Adult Family; and Elderly. An 'Elderly' applicant is classified as being 60 years or older.

- Of the total applicants, around 5,950 (16%) are elderly;
- 4,090 of these (68%) are deemed to be in Housing Stress (statistics are a point in time);

- During the twelve months up to the end of March 2019, 1,142 allocations were made to elderly applicants;
- There were 319 allocations (28%) made by the Housing Executive; and
- The remaining 823 (72%) were allocated by the Housing Associations.

During the 2018/19 year, there were around 18,200 homelessness presenters across all of Northern Ireland;

- Of these, 2,500, or approximately 14% of presenters were older people (Elderly category) (60+); and
- The majority of these presenters were granted Full Duty Applicant (FDA) status[12].

Of those in the Elderly category who presented to us as homeless, the tenures that the highest percentages are likely to originate from are:

- Owner Occupied tenure (29%);
- Private Rented Sector (25%);
- NIHE Tenants (17%);
- Others (29%) (which includes Housing Association Tenants and Hospital).

The main reasons for older people presenting as homeless are:

- 'Accommodation Not Reasonable – Physical Health' (50%);
    a) 38% were owner occupiers;
    b) 26% were from the Private Rented Sector; and
    c) 20% were Housing Executive tenants
- 'Accommodation Not Reasonable' (10%);
- Breakdown of Sharing/Family Dispute (5%);
- Relationship Breakdown (5%).

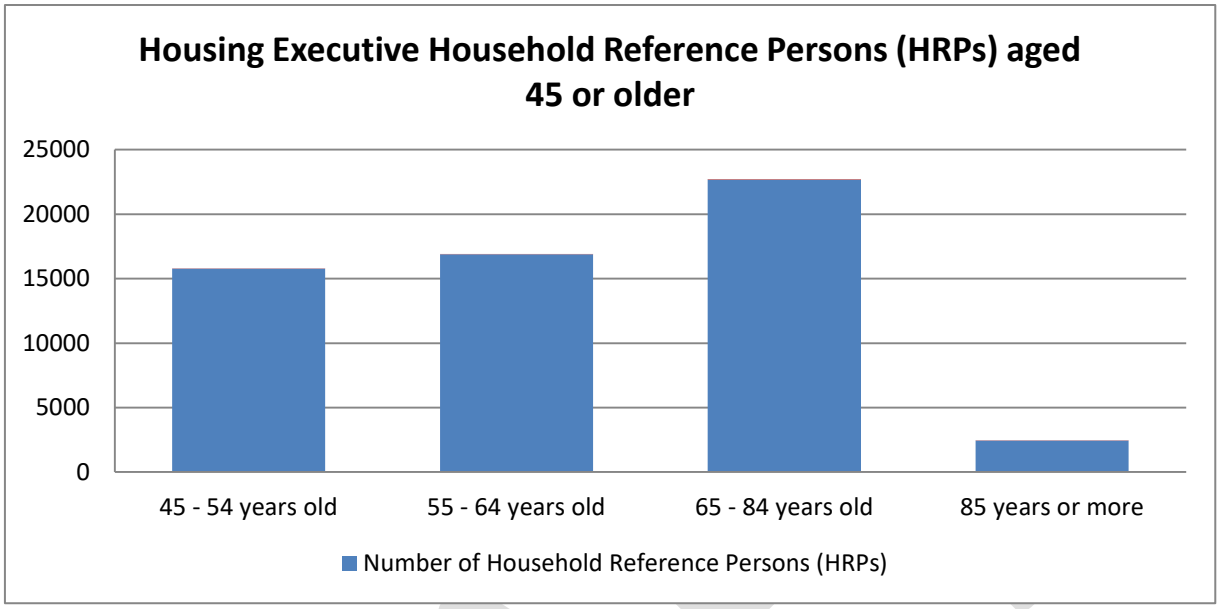
Housing Executive Tenant Demographics

We are a Landlord with a stock of around 85,000 homes and our stock includes a range of house types from standard 3 bedroom accommodation, bungalows, apartments (including Tower Blocks) to Labourers Cottages.

Almost 58,000 Household Reference Persons (HRPs)[13] in our properties are aged 45 or older. This accounts for almost 70% of all our tenancies. Chart 4 below sets out the age ranges of these tenants. The greatest HRP statistic is in the 65 to 84 years of age group.

[12] A Full Duty Applicant is a person to whom the Housing Executive owes a duty under Article 10 (2) of the Housing (NI) Order, 1988 to "secure that accommodation becomes available for his / her occupation".
[13] Household Reference Person (HRP)
The HRP is generally the member of the household who owns or pays the rent or mortgage on the property.

Chart 4: Data showing age profiles of Housing Executive tenants who are 45 plus years old.
(Source: 2017 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey)



Map 4 below depicts percentage of stock, by bedroom size across our 13 Areas. The size of each pie chart reflects the overall stock of each Area and each segment reflects the percentage of overall stock, by bedroom size in that area. It should be noted that we have a number of properties with more than 4 bedrooms; however we concentrated on only those up to and including 4 bedrooms.

The map above does not include housing association properties. Housing Associations provide 35,600 social homes throughout Northern Ireland, many of which are for older people. Details can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/housing-associations

Housing Supply

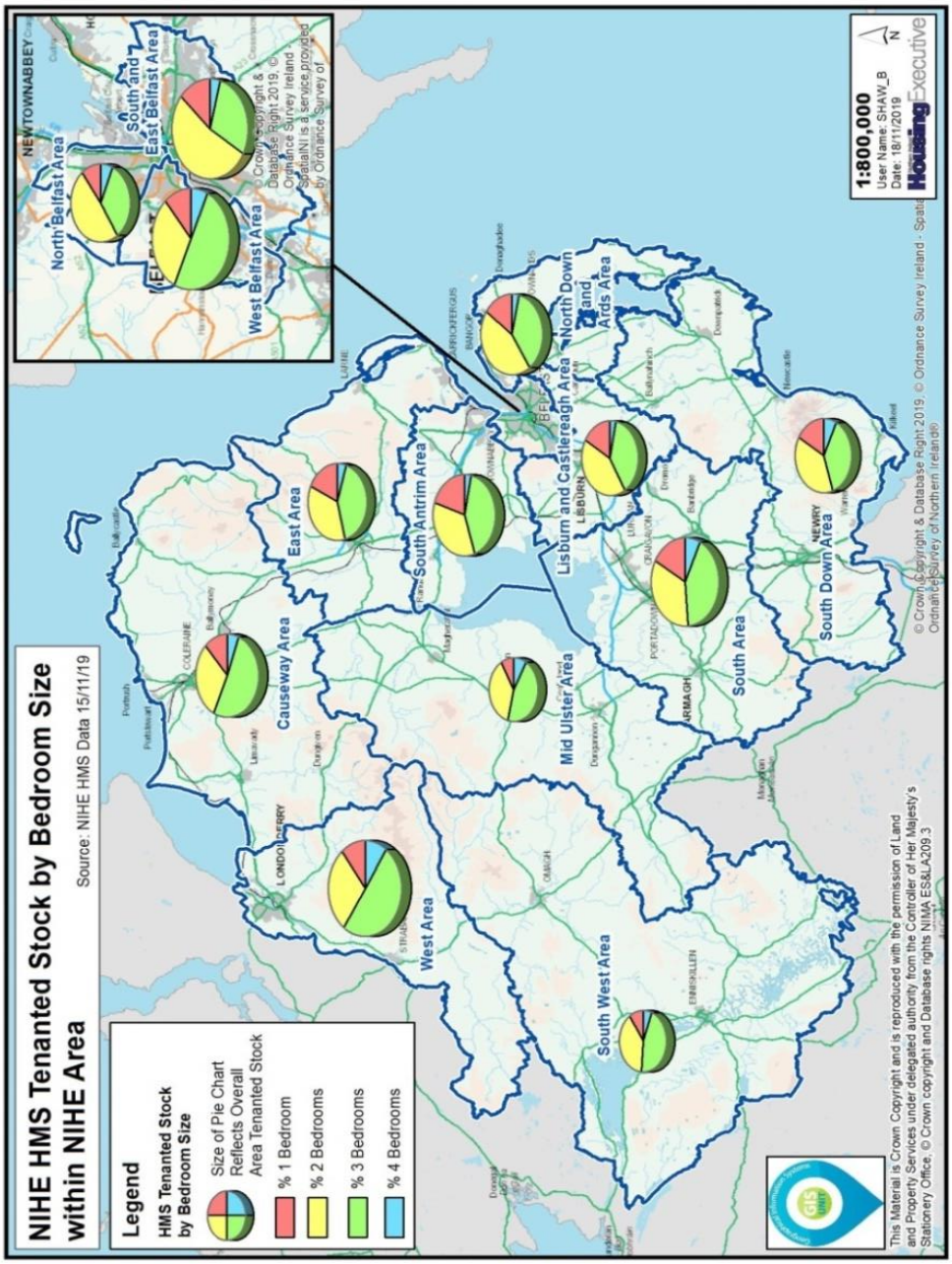
For many years, provision of housing was, to a large extent, focussed on family housing, although more latterly smaller units of accommodation have been built in both the private and social sectors. The Housing Executive is responsible for planning and managing the Social Housing Development Programme, however, new social homes have been built exclusively by Housing Associations since 2002. Housing Association stock includes a range of elderly type accommodation, for example Sheltered, Category 1 and 1 bed units. The Housing Executive responds to draft Local Development Plans and details can be found under Theme 1: Planning for the future.

With an ageing society and smaller household sizes (2.54 based on mid-year 2016 NISRA data and projected to reduce to 2.42 in 2041), it is important to note the long

term investment in housing (properties can last for 70 plus years) and to ensure that there are flexible sustainable housing choices that meet the needs of this changing demography.

Research conducted by Retire Easy found that one third of respondents listed downsizing as one of their planned future options in order to release an average of 33% of their capital. This however, is only a potential option in the owner occupied sector and currently these schemes are not widely available in Northern Ireland.

Map 4 – Housing Executive stock breakdown by number of bedrooms
(Source: Housing Management System)



Community Involvement

Tackling loneliness is an important societal issue, as published statistics show that lonely people are more likely to suffer from dementia, heart disease and depression. Around 3.6 million older people in the UK live alone, of whom 2 million are aged 75 years or older. It is estimated that 1.9 million older people often feel ignored or invisible.[14] Research has also shown that up to 50% of disabled people will be lonely on any given day.[15]

Whilst there are many definitions of loneliness, it is widely accepted that loneliness is an individual's negative perception of the quality or quantity of their social relationships.[16] Loneliness can affect people of all ages. Being older does not increase the likelihood of experiencing loneliness, however being older may amplify the effect of the factors that can increase the risk of feeling lonely[17].

The Housing Executive has a long history of effective and practical engagement with our communities, especially in communicating with what are sometimes described as 'hard to reach' groups of people. We already have community strategies operating in our estates and we feel that it is important to tackle loneliness and promote integration and participation of not just older people but people of all ages and backgrounds. We have included details of our strategies along with links in Appendix 1.

As housing providers, we recognise and have put in place a range of measures to help older people as their health and support needs change over time. We have responded to this both in fostering vibrant and sustainable communities as well as administering and delivering a range of initiatives to support people in their homes, both in the social and the private sectors. These include our grants service which provides funding for adaptations for those in the private sector, the modifications we make to our own properties, the housing support services funded through our administration of the Supporting People Programme, and providing funding for the development of social enterprises and community based initiatives which support, promote and enable community participation.

Adaptations to homes, either major or minor adaptations such as hand grab rails, showers or ramps have a key role in promoting independence, preventing falls and injuries, improving mental and physical wellbeing, and supporting our tenants to stay in their homes and in their community. This can sometimes be in response to a significant event in a person's life but research suggests that it may be beneficial to provide adaptations before such a health crisis occurs.

[14] https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/loneliness/
[15] https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-facts-on-loneliness/
[16] Vasiliki Tzouvara et al., A narrative review of the theoretical foundations of loneliness, British Journal of Community Nursing, Vol 20, No 7, July 2015
[17] Age UK, All the Lonely People: Loneliness in Later Life, September 2018, p2; Maike Luhmann and Louise C. Hawkley, Age Differences in Loneliness from Late Adolescence to Oldest Old Age, Developmental Psychology, 23 February, 2016

We have a programme of work to help our tenants, however, demand is likely to increase as evidenced by demographic projections. Increasing demand may impact on the services and resources we direct to them and any funding associated with this going forward.

Summary

The ageing population in Northern Ireland will pose significant challenges for the future design and delivery of many essential services, including housing. Good planning for the future is key to ensuring that the decisions we make in relation to older people are sustainable and flexible to support the wide ranging choices, aspirations and needs for an ageing population. We recognise that some people wish to remain in their family homes, either on their own, with their carer, or with family support, for as long as is practical. Where this is the case, we will support independent living as best we can through many strands of our work. This includes:

- Grants (such as Disabled Facilities Grants in the Private Sector);
- Grants for Warm Homes and Boiler Replacements (subject to funding);
- Adaptations to our own stock;
- Maintaining and improving the fabric of our buildings through our energy efficiency programme and planned maintenance schemes; and
- Maximising the use of floating support and using assistive technology where appropriate.

Staying, however, is only one option. For others, who are no longer able to remain in their homes or have a desire to move or downsize, it is essential that we, along with our partners, explore new models and ways of delivering housing for an increasingly ageing society.

These could include a range of options for those interested in this type of housing, such as smaller level access properties in all tenures, sheltered accommodation, retirement villages or Extra-Care Housing. Extra-care housing allows residents to maintain their independence if they wish, but also offers on-site health and social care assistance, if required.

As new models of housing delivery emerge for older people, better understanding these options, and providing advice and assistance will allow us to offer an enhanced service for our customers.

This should be supported by a range of community based initiatives that promote inclusion and participation for older people, allowing them to remain connected to their community, remain active, and feel safe and secure, as well as protecting and promoting their self-fulfilment and dignity.

The Housing Executive has an opportunity to help support an ageing population through the right planning, policies, services and programmes it delivers. Many of these, however, cannot be delivered solely by the Housing Executive and will require

partnership working with a wide range of stakeholders, ongoing research and engagement, as well as ensuring we are responsive and adaptive to any changing government policy, strategy direction or legislation that may arise during the course of this strategy.

In Section 4.0 of this document, we outline our approach and plan in respect of the ageing population. We will deliver new services and initiatives under four broad themes which are:

1. Planning for the future;
2. Respecting people's dignity;
3. Housing advice for older people; and
4. Promoting participation.

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4.0 Older People's Housing Strategy

This Housing Strategy for Older People aims to address some of the issues outlined in the context section that are within our remit, while for others we will work in partnership and promote our work through our Community Planning role as a statutory partner. We have forged close relationships with councils, recognising the value in collaborative working on areas of mutual interest in urban and rural areas across Northern Ireland as a more efficient use of resources. This is essential within the context of constrained public sector finances.

Delivering the Strategy

A house alone is not enough to support the needs of people as they age, and with this in mind we have developed four high level delivery themes.

These are:

- Planning for the Future (Exploring Housing Options for Older People and Supporting Independent Living);
- Promoting and Maintaining People's Dignity;
- Providing Housing Advice for Older People;
- Promoting Participation.

We will report regularly on how well we are performing against our high level objectives to enable us to understand if our interventions and actions have helped to address the needs of Northern Ireland's older population over the period of the Strategy. We will publish the results on our website.

Managing Uncertainties

We recognise that in setting out a plan for the five year term of the Strategy there are a number of uncertainties that may impact on the delivery of the Strategy.

Our Regional side of the business[18] is funded almost entirely through government grant. Budget restrictions may have implications for some of our services.

Our plans need to be flexible to allow for changes that may arise over the life of the strategy such as a change in the housing market, government policy or priorities. Despite this uncertainty we will remain focussed on providing effective housing solutions, services and options for our older customers.

It is through the Housing Executive's unique position as the Regional Housing Authority for Northern Ireland and as one of the largest social housing landlords in

[18] Regional Services role is to work strategically in housing across Northern Ireland in supporting a range of stakeholders to create successful places and communities. Regional Services deliver a range of functions including research, assessment of housing need, delivery of the social housing development programme and the Supporting People programme. In addition, Regional Services deliver a range of grant initiatives to address fuel poverty and housing disability adaptation and we are the Home Energy Conservation Authority for Northern Ireland.

the UK, that we have a real opportunity to effect change and support older people in a tangible and meaningful way.

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Theme 1: Planning for the Future

Under 'Planning for the Future' theme, we have identified two objectives. These are:

1. Exploring Housing Options for Older People; and
2. Supporting Independent Living.

1. Exploring Housing Options for Older People

As previously documented, demographic changes are important for future planning for new homes.

- Older people 60+ (230,000) live in almost one third of all homes; (HCS)
- 78.2% live in Owner Occupied sector; 7.5% in Private Rented sector and 14.3% in social housing (HCS);
- Older people were slightly less likely to live in properties with some level of disrepair (HCS);
- The 65+ age group is projected to reach 491,000 by 2041, an increase of 65% (NISRA);
- People aged 85+ is set to increase by 127% by 2041 (subset of 65+ group) (NISRA).

Our recent research highlighted the existing accommodation options for older people in Northern Ireland. There are three main types of accommodation for older people across all tenure types:

- Mainstream housing;
- Specialised housing (this can include sheltered housing, assisted living or retirement villages); and
- Residential care (this includes residential homes with meals and personal care, nursing homes with 24-hour nursing care and specialised care homes e.g. dementia care).

Our recent House Condition Survey in 2016 results show the property types that older people (60+) live in across all tenures is:

- 29% live in bungalows;
- 24% live in terraced housing;
- 19% live in semi-detached;
- 20% in detached housing; and
- 8% live in flats or apartments.

Our research showed that there are a sizable number of older people living in properties that are larger than their needs.

- 70% of respondents lived in single person households;
- The majority (58%) were in the owner occupied sector with 41% of participants in the social sector;
- Only 33% of respondents lived in a one bedroom property, 20% live in two bedroom properties, 32% live in three bedroom properties and 15% of respondents live in homes with four or more bedrooms;
- 16% of respondents have a stair lift/mobility aid or cannot access the rooms upstairs; and
- 26% of respondents have difficulty in accessing any outside space around their property.

Our research[19] found that:

- Location was a factor that can limit options and choice and people's appetite to move;
- Older people prefer to remain within a relatively narrow radius (5 miles or less) of their current accommodation. The importance of linkages to family, friends and local services and amenities was clear. This preference is prevalent across the wider social rented sector, but particularly with older people. Given the population projections (detailed on Map 2 and 3 earlier in this document) this preference may pose challenges to and have an impact on the planning and delivery of a range of housing models and any services in place to support these. For example, transport links, public services and infrastructure.
- To date, there has been minimal development of specialised older people's housing for either owner occupation or private rental in Northern Ireland, but housing of this type, such as gated schemes for over 55s, is increasingly being developed by private developers for purchase or private rental elsewhere. These have been shown to be very popular.

If more choice of smaller suitable properties were available both in urban and rural areas this would provide an opportunity to free up larger properties in all tenures for families. In planning for the future, it is also important to consider the needs of the rural older population who are more likely to live in dwellings with higher levels of disrepair, fuel poverty and higher repair costs[20] and are more likely to fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard[21] than those in urban areas.

[19] https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Research/Health-and-welfare/housing-and-older-people-issues-aspirations-needs

[20] https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey

[21] A decent home is one that is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. A decent home meets the following four criteria: Criterion a: It meets the current statutory minimum standards for housing. Criterion

Housing for Older People – Planning Issues

It is likely, given the demographic trends and increased demand for care, the need for other solutions will grow. There are increasing numbers with complex disabilities living in domestic settings. Housing Associations already cater for identified wheelchair need in their social housing planning applications. However, demand from people with a disability who wish to own their own homes, or rent privately, cannot readily be met, as there is no requirement for market housing to provide wheelchair accessible homes.

The Housing Executive encourages council planners to incorporate, within the emerging Local Development Plans, a requirement that all new build housing should meet Lifetime Home standards, with a proportion built to wheelchair standards. Lifetime Home standards were developed to ensure that homes are accessible and inclusive, to support the changing needs of individuals and families at different stages of life.

In addition, we support requirements in development plans to include housing mix policies in new residential development which can provide appropriate housing for different household groups, such as families and older people.

We also support sustainable transportation policies within the emerging LDPs to encourage walking, cycling and accessible public transport to promote healthy life styles, minimise climate change and to improve connectivity for those who do not have access to a private car, including children, disabled people and older people. We support the integration of transport and patterns of development, which reduce the need to travel, as well as being more sustainable.

There have been some recent examples of alternative housing options for older people in Northern Ireland. An increase in desirable, accessible housing options will enable older people to move allowing 'active stock management', to release housing to meet need and demand from younger households and families. Wheelchair accessible housing and housing to Lifetime Homes standards will allow older and disabled people to feel safe and secure, and to be fully integrated within the residential community.

Intermediate Housing for Older People

The Department for Communities recent consultation on Affordable Housing suggests a key target group for affordable housing is active older people:

> "Active Older People – demographic change is expected to result in a growing demand for housing that is designed to meet the needs, expectations and aspirations of older people. For this group, housing that is easy to maintain and is fit for purpose as they age, and is within or close to their current neighbourhoods is likely to provide an attractive product. Housing which conforms to the HAPPI

b: It is in a reasonable state of repair. Criterion c: It has reasonably modern facilities and services. Criterion d: It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

> principles could fill this key gap in the market, but additional assistance may be required to help some individuals within this category to transition to these more suitable homes."

More detail on the HAPPI principles can be found on page 39 of this document.

Extra-Care Housing

Given the links between age and deteriorating health, there may be an increasing demand for specialised suitable housing provision for some older people. A rapidly ageing population will place significant demands on pressured health and social care services. Research[22] carried out noted that while some forms of housing such as sheltered accommodation may initially meet the residents' requirements it may be increasingly difficult to sustain the tenancies of very frail elderly (those who increasingly require healthcare and support) as they age and who may require more intensive support. This includes their tenancy, health and support needs as well as their levels of community participation and general happiness.

'Extra Care' Housing is housing accommodation for older and vulnerable people that both allows residents to maintain their independence if they wish, but also offers on-site health and social care assistance, if required. Whilst there are some communal facilities, accommodation is self-contained and has its own front door. Some Extra Care facilities also offer wider benefits to the residents and the local community including the reduction in the need for health and social care services, better stock management of housing in local areas and the reduction in hospital bed occupancy rates (as evidenced through examples in Great Britain where it is much more established). This model however is relatively new to Northern Ireland.

Some Extra Care housing units have facilities such as hairdressers and restaurants on site and host social events, all of which are also open to non-residents. Others have developed enterprises within Extra Care facilities such as restaurants employing those with learning difficulties or people who are homeless. Local integration within a community setting is a key consideration when developing Extra Care facilities to ensure that residents are supported and enabled both by the physical environment and wider community and societal environment they are situated in.

In other jurisdictions 'Extra Care Housing' has been utilised to meet the health and social care needs of elderly and other vulnerable people and has demonstrated that the number of hospital bed days utilised by older patients could be cut both through admission/readmission and through earlier discharges. Potentially this may free up hospital beds for other patients which can result in savings to the public purse.

[22] Tinker, A, Kellaher, L., Ginn, J. and Ribe, E. (2013) Assisted Living Platform – The Long Term Care Revolution, London: King's College London. Reproduced by the Housing Learning and Improvement Network

This can have wider positive impacts on the housing market for example, freeing up larger family homes and better matching properties to the needs and preferences of individuals. We will explore the practicality of this option in the Northern Ireland context further in the coming years.

'Hub and Spoke Models'

'Hub and Spoke' models can offer services and facilities to the wider community, as well as to residents of the scheme. This means that a range of services including housing support can be provided from a central point over a defined geographical area to people within the surrounding community.

These are often based at existing sheltered housing schemes (the hub) and could extend services (spokes) offered to meet the needs of the growing older population. If a scheme has adequate facilities, and providing there was sufficient demand, other services could be added to benefit older people. These could include community health services on a permanent or ad hoc basis, personal and domestic teams based at the scheme and working in the wider community, housing support, occupational therapy and opportunities for recreational activities.

We will explore new models of accommodation and housing related support services for a range of older people including the potential and feasibility of 'Extra Care' or 'hub and spoke' principles for housing, for older people in Northern Ireland.

The Housing Executive has robust housing needs assessments in place such as monitoring and analysing data for 'Elderly' (60+) people from the social housing waiting list, those in housing stress, homelessness presenters and those who have been allocated properties. This information is used to develop the Social Housing Development Programme for new social housing which considers the needs of Older People.

Our research noted potential areas of latent demand and the types of property supplied. Latent demand is hidden housing need in areas of low housing stock or low housing turnover. We also carry out 'latent demand testing' specifically in rural areas.

However, at a broader level, beyond the high-level data provided by the House Condition Survey, there is less evidence on the extent to which the existing housing stock, especially in the private sector, can successfully meet the needs and aspirations of an ageing population. We know that in the private sector there are more older households than the social or private rented sectors. Older, pre-1919, dwellings are more prevalent in the private sector and of the 7% of occupied dwellings that failed the decent homes standard in 2016 the types of households more likely to live in these properties were those with older household reference persons and those with lower income households.

Accessible Housing

There are different models of accessible housing which includes a range of options and homes that have been adapted.

To aid planning for the future, we are developing an 'Accessible Housing Register' (AHR) which will provide us with better knowledge of social homes that have been adapted or bespoke properties and act as a planning tool to assist with the identification of unmet need.

'Lifetime Homes' standards were developed to ensure that homes are accessible and inclusive to support the changing needs of individuals and are designed to create better living environments for everyone from raising children to coping with illness or reduced mobility later in life. The development of these standards is especially important in the context of an ageing population and can prevent the need for costly and disruptive adaptations and also enable independence and provide greater choice for more people, for longer.

In addition to the 16 criteria required for 'Lifetime Homes', the Department for Communities also requires 9 additional criteria in grant aided social housing developments which include factors such as level access, potential for the enlargement of car parking spaces, outward opening of certain doors, capacity for turning a wheelchair, and access within kitchen areas and WC.

Wheelchair standard homes support independent living and may also reduce the need for costly adaptations. In the social sector we plan for Wheelchair Housing which is primarily designed to aid independent living for people with a physical disability and those who need a wheelchair for day to day mobility.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are managed by the Housing Executive. The design of accommodation and the availability of financial support to adapt the home to meet occupants' changing needs enables people, including older citizens, to remain comfortably in their own homes with as much independence as possible. (DFGs, like most grants, are subject to annual funding and means testing of applicants).

In 2018/19 we approved grants of almost £30m across all sectors, including £10.4m on 944 Disabled Facilities Grants in the Private Sector.

Designing for the future

Better design of housing is linked to independence, happiness and the general wellbeing of people. The design of the built environment can have a significant impact on older people and the design should create an enabling environment that gives people independence, choice, allows them to maintain their lifestyle and contact with the wider community. Design should also facilitate the efficient delivery of care and enhance the quality of life for the residents.

Improved design in relation to space, lighting, balconies and manageable outdoor space, ventilation, room to move and good storage have particular relevance to older people's housing which needs to offer an attractive alternative to traditional family homes. In short, cleverly designed models of housing that work for older people, work for everyone else, and would allow people to remain in one place.

These homes also need to be able to adapt over time to changing needs. Many older people have adult children living at home and may require space for family support or care-givers as they age. Incorporating good design principles such as the **'Housing and Ageing Population Panel for Innovation' (HAPPI)** principles could make a meaningful difference to the lives of many older people and their families.

What are the HAPPI Principles?

- Generous internal space standards;
- Plenty of natural light in the home and in circulation spaces;
- Balconies and outdoor space, avoiding internal corridors and single-aspect flats;
- Adaptability and 'care aware' design which is ready for emerging telecare and tele-healthcare technologies;
- Circulation spaces that encourage interaction and avoid an 'institutional feel';
- Shared facilities and community 'hubs' where these are lacking in the neighbourhood;
- Plants, trees and the natural environment;
- High levels of energy efficiency, with good ventilation to avoid overheating;
- Extra storage for belongings and bicycles; and
- Shared external areas such as 'home zones' that give priority to pedestrians.

We are currently working in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC) to develop a pilot scheme that incorporates HAPPI style principles into reconfigured stock and we will evaluate the success of this pilot and identify any implications when complete. Some housing associations have incorporated these principles into pilot schemes which offer high quality housing for those later in life, however these principles have not been widely adopted in Northern Ireland.

Where appropriate, better design will also be complemented by assistive technology. Assistive technology spans walking aids to more complex and advanced digital solutions that can assist with a range of tasks such as opening doors, turning on lights and using household appliances. With many people wishing to maintain their independence and stay in their homes as long as possible, assistive technology can have a part to play in helping manage complex health conditions and enable older people to live with dignity and combat social isolation. We have supported assistive technology through our grants function and will continue to do so where appropriate. Examples of assistive technology grants include automatic doors, buzz entry systems, and rise and fall sinks/baths.

Planning, and building, new homes continues to be a key issue for the wider social sector, including older people. We will continue to influence the planning aspect to ensure that new homes and communities are sustainable and will support the changing demography of our society through our new build programme.

Many of our tower blocks house older people, some of whom have lived there for a long time. We will need to consider the impact that the removal of some tower blocks may have on these particular individuals, their housing requirements, and any impacts or disruption to their sense of community and belonging that they may encounter.

We, along with partner agencies, should raise awareness of the range of options available to older people, including newer models of provision, for example, retirement villages, and existing models of provision such as sheltered housing. This would allow older people to be more informed of their choices and options.

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Planning for the Future – High level Action Plan			
Exploring Housing Options for Older People		**Lead Department**	**Target Date**
1.	We will seek to influence Lifetime Homes being adopted into the general housing stock in the private sector.	Regional Services	By 2025/26
2.	We will explore new models of accommodation and housing related support services for a range of older people including the potential and feasibility of 'Extra Care' or 'hub and spoke' principles for housing, for older people in Northern Ireland.	Regional Services	2020/21
3.	We will work with partners to incorporate better design principles into the specification for the delivery of future housing schemes and evaluate the feasibility of reconfiguring existing schemes to meet the needs and demands of older people.	Regional Services	2020/21
4.	We will seek to increase the supply of wheelchair accessible accommodation in Northern Ireland from 7% within the Social Housing Development Programme in 2018/19 to 10% by the end of 2020/21.	Regional Services	2020/21
5.	Where possible, we will explore reconfiguring current provision of our stock.	Asset Management	2020/21
6.	We will launch our Accessible Housing Register (AHR) and work with partners to continuously enhance and improve our understanding of adapted or bespoke stock.	Regional Services/ Asset Management	2020/21
7.	We, along with partner agencies, should raise awareness of the range of options available to older people, including newer models of provision through our housing options service.	Housing Services	Annually
8.	Through the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP), we will continue to influence the planning aspect of new social homes to ensure that new homes and communities are sustainable and will support the	Regional Services	Annually

	changing demographics of our society (including older people).		
9.	We will explore and maximize the role assistive technology may have in enhancing housing options for older people.	Asset Management/Housing Services/Regional Services	Annually
10.	One of the recommendations of the Older People's research was that a strategic view to assess the location and dwelling type available across all tenures, linked to the regional distribution of older people in the population was required to inform future planning decisions for social and affordable homes. We will carry out further research, relating to older people's housing, where we deem appropriate.	Regional Services	Annually

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2. Supporting Independent Living

Many older people have spent significant portions of their lives in the same home, raising their families and making friendships and connections in their local community. They often have significant emotional ties with their home and are understandably reluctant to leave their current accommodation. We have many services that help people to remain in their own home for as long as is possible and if they are able to do so, for example our grants and adaptation services. We recognise that with an increasing ageing population, many people will have increased health and mobility problems and require at least some element of support to help stay independent in their home for as long as possible.

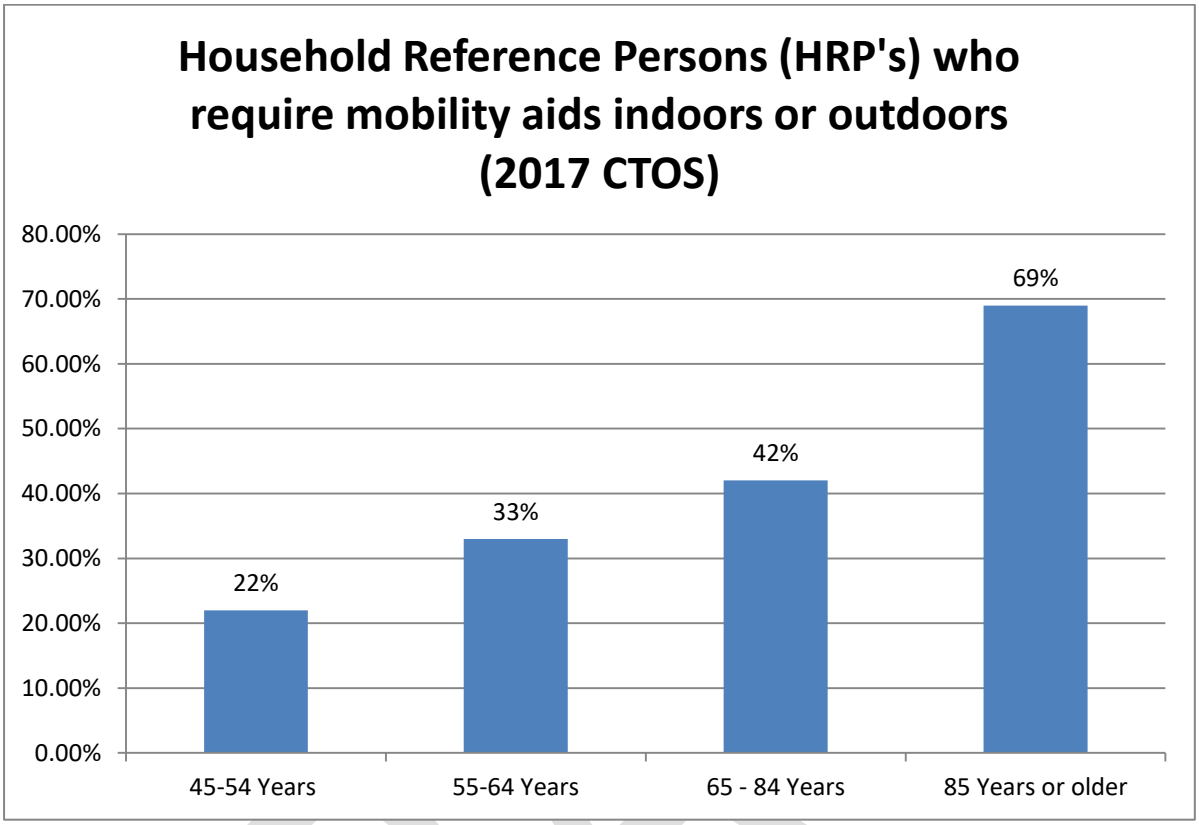
According to the Northern Ireland Health Survey (2017/18)[23],

- 14% of the population have reported a fall in or around the home in the last two years;
- older respondents were more likely to have experienced a fall; and
- The likelihood of a fall increased from 19% for those aged 65-74 years to 31% of those aged over 75 years.

The percentage of Housing Executive tenant "head of households", who report a long term health problem, illness, or disability increases to over 70% for those aged 55 or older. In addition to this, the percentage who require mobility aids such as sticks, crutches and zimmer frames increases dramatically as they age as shown in the Chart 5 below.

[23] https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-survey-northern-ireland-first-results-201718

Chart 5: Data showing percentage of Housing Executive tenants, by age, who require mobility aids indoors or outdoors.
(Source: 2017 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey)



For our tenants, based on the data from our 2017 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey, the older the tenant, the more likely they are to have been in the property for more than 5 years and the happier they are with our service.

- Overall tenant satisfaction is 94% for those aged 65-84 years of age and this increases to 99% for those aged 85 or older;
- Overall satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live for those aged 65-84 years of age is 95% and this increases to 97% for those aged 85 years or older.

Based on recent Housing Executive research which was cross tenure, although a relatively small sample size, it was noted that the majority of older people wished to remain in their current accommodation without having to move at all later in life. Those aged between 55-69 years old were particularly determined to do so. The research noted that older people aged 85 years or older who lived in supported sheltered accommodation schemes stated that they had made a move as a result of declining health and that it was their preference to remain in their own home.

The greater use of grants and Floating Support may provide a cost effective alternative to having to move into social housing or having to stay in hospital due to inadequate housing to move back to.

Grants and Adaptations

For those vulnerable people (including older people) who prefer to remain in their homes, we administer a variety of grants and adaptations to support them both in the private sector and for our own tenants.

For our tenants, where an occupational therapist from the appropriate Health & Social Care Trust makes a recommendation, and depending on its feasibility, we undertake bespoke adaptations to our own stock. These are often complex adaptations and extensions (external and internal) and may include bedroom or bathroom extensions, provision of ground floor WC and/or ground floor showers, level access showers, access ramps and specialist baths and toilets. We have reviewed our major adaptations process and are aiming to reduce the time to deliver these to a target of 52 weeks (following statutory and occupational therapist approvals) by the end of 2020/21.

Minor adaptations, such as handrails and widening of footpaths and alterations to lighting, can be installed without the need for a referral to Health and Social Care. In the last three financial years we have carried out over 18,000 minor and major adaptations.

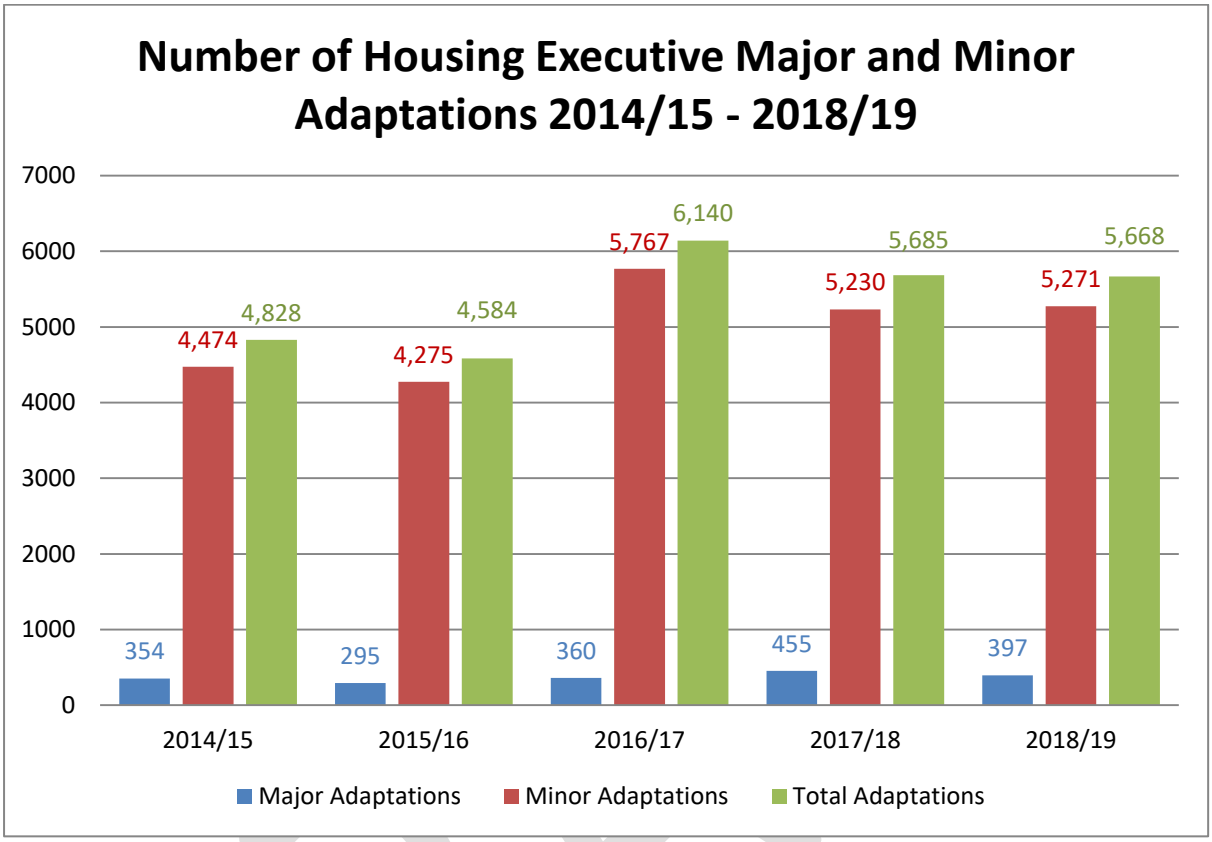
Housing Associations also provide this service to their own tenants, funded by a 'Disability Adaptation Grant' which is included within the wider Social Housing Development Programme budget. During 2018/19 the Housing Executive approved 982 DAG claims (966 minor and 16 major). See Chart 6.

We also administer a Disabled Facilities Grant which funds adaptations for homes in the private sector for a person with a disability and is based on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist. This is available to owner occupiers, landlords or private tenants. Customers may qualify if there is a person with disabilities living in the house and the work is recommended by an Occupational Therapist. Work recommended may include improved access to bathroom, living room or bedroom, adding extra bathroom facilities or adapting/upgrading lighting or heating systems. Depending on individual financial circumstances, homeowners and private landlords may need to make a contribution to the cost of the work. In recent years we have redesigned this service to improve the customer experience. However, it can still be a lengthy process. There are some capacity issues that would need to be explored along with other improvement models which could assist in reducing the time taken for improvements to be completed.

We will explore the feasibility of innovative options for the off-site construction of modular adaption pods to further enhance our major adaptations process.

Chart 6: Data the number of Housing Executive major and minor adaptations 2014/15 – 2018/19

(Source: Adaptations Team, Housing Executive)



There are health impacts for people living in poor standard homes and their ability to live independently. An estimate on some of the costs of poor housing for the NHS in England has been suggested at £1.4 billion per year.[24] 'Poor housing' refers to dwellings that have at least 1 of the 26 Category 1 hazards (scoring over 1,000 on the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) scale). Homes in the private sector and homes that were built pre-1919 are more likely to have at least 1 Category 1 hazard.

- In addition to this, the savings to the NHS from addressing excess cold is projected at £848 million; and
- The savings to the NHS in addressing fall hazards are £425 million for first year treatment costs.

We commissioned a report to model the cost of poor housing in Northern Ireland as measured by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). Although not implemented in Northern Ireland, the HHSRS is a risk based system that identifies

[24] British Research Establishment (2016) The full cost of poor housing. Available at: https://www.bre.co.uk/news/New-BRE-Trust-report-shows-poor-quality-homes-in-England-cost-the-NHS-14bn-per-year-and-wider-society-186bn-1161.html

defects in dwellings and evaluates the potential effect of any defects or deficiencies on the health and safety of occupants, visitors, neighbours or passers-by.

This report based on the 2016 House Condition Survey data identified that the cost of poor housing to society has been estimated at approximately £401m per year.[25] The most common hazards identified were falls on stairs, falls on level surfaces, and excess cold. These are also more likely to impact older people who may be more frail, susceptible to cold, and more likely to require assistance when walking in or around the home.

The analysis calculated that the average cost to reduce 'Category 1' hazards present in nearly 70,000 properties in Northern Ireland was approximately £4,366 per dwelling with a total cost of approximately £305 million for the whole stock. However, if 'up front' improvements were completed to mitigate the hazards in housing, this could save the NHS £39.5m per year.

Minor adaptations may be a relatively low cost and effective way to allow people to remain in their current homes and communities. However, the uptake of these often happens after people have suffered a health crisis or a fall. It has been suggested that improving the design of different forms of adaptations and assistive technology may help to reduce the perceived stigma associated with them[26] and may work towards reducing ageist attitudes towards various forms of assistance. This could make these interventions more attractive to users and could increase the uptake of this form of assistance before a health crisis or fall occurs.

Poor housing can negatively impact on other elements of health and wellbeing such as anxiety, depression and loneliness.

Sheltered Housing

Research noted that sheltered housing (Category 2), mainly built in the 1970s/1980s, continues to be a popular housing option for many older people[27]. Some of the reasons that they had moved into sheltered accommodation was because of deteriorating health, reduced mobility, the death of a partner, as a result of adult children not living nearby to support them or through personal choice. This type of accommodation also provided safety, security and companionship, which was important to the residents. It was also noted that there was a lack of other affordable and suitable options which would suit their finances at that stage of their life.

[25] https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Research/HCS-2016-Additional-Reports/The-cost-of-poor-housing-in-Northern-Ireland-2016

[26] https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/appg/appg-for-ageing-and-older-people---report-on-decent-and-accessible-homes-for-older-people.pdf

[27] https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getmedia/fe20bf26-1bae-43e9-8025-2d85ed841cf6/the_role_of_sheltered_housing_in_northern_ireland_and_future_issues__published_september_2012_.pdf.aspx

Supporting People currently provides funding to 335 Sheltered Accommodation schemes for the provision of housing related support for older people and for many this has proven to be a popular housing solution.

Previous research was carried out in 2012 and it may be useful to carry out further research on the sheltered accommodation model as a future housing option.

Energy Efficient Homes

Older people are more likely to be impacted by fuel poverty. Based on information in the 2016 House Condition Survey (for all tenures), under the 10% definition of 'fuel poverty':

- 38% of households headed by an older person (75 years or older) were in fuel poverty and 34% of older households were 'fuel poor'[28];
- 31% of households that were headed by a retired person were in fuel poverty;
- 27% of those who were permanently sick/disabled or looking after family/home were also in fuel poverty;
- Older people also tend to live in older, less energy efficient homes.

Fuel poverty is influenced by three factors: a person's income, the price of fuel and the thermal efficiency of their home. Whilst we signpost customers to increase benefit uptake, we cannot influence a person's income or the price of fuel. However, we recognise the need to improve thermal comfort and reduce energy costs for older people through a range of initiatives, including oil buying clubs and through administering energy advice and guidance. Fuel poverty levels have reduced from 42% in 2011 to 21% in 2018, reflecting the levels of investment in energy efficiency across all tenures in Northern Ireland. Although it should be noted that this analysis was calculated at a point in time when fuel costs were less expensive.

In 2018/19 across the private sector, our Grants Department managed approximately £14.5m of work to 3,205 homes through the Department for Communities Affordable Warmth Scheme. An additional £1.9m was invested in 2,690 privately owned homes to install new energy efficient boilers through the Department for Communities Boiler Replacement Scheme. Subject to funding, we will continue to deliver a range of energy efficiency measures to private sector households and help owner occupiers replace old central heating boilers through the Boiler Replacement Scheme.

We continuously strive to improve the fabric and the thermal efficiency of all of our tenant's homes through investments, such as, installing better and more efficient heating systems, double glazing, insulation and cladding schemes undertaken as part of our Landlord role.

[28] Fuel poverty has also been measured using the Low Income High Costs (LIHC) indicator, a household is considered to be fuel poor if: They have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level); Were they to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

Floating Support

Our Supporting People Programme provides housing related support to over 19,000 vulnerable customers across Northern Ireland each year. Customers can be supported in a number of ways including through Floating Support. Floating Support assists people that need housing related support to maintain independence in their own home, for example, through decluttering services, befriending schemes and through providing advice on benefit maximisation. A key customer group within the Supporting People programme is older people. Supporting People's budget for 2018/19 was £72.8m and last year 14% of this budget was directed at supporting older people (55+).

Floating Support provides short-term accommodation based support (up to two years, although this is currently under review by the Department for Communities) to assist those who need housing-related support.

A review of Supporting People by the then Department for Social Development (DSD) noted that the Floating Support Model plays a key role in early "intervention and prevention" and recommended that the Housing Executive progress opportunities to extend the Floating Support service as a cost effective way of meeting need. During 2019/20 we continued to prioritise floating support as a mechanism for promoting early intervention and support to enable independent living within a home setting.

At the time of writing this Strategy there are 10 Floating Support services for older people in Northern Ireland. Trend analysis of need and gaps in service provision identified gaps for Floating Support. As a result we have identified four geographical areas with 200 new floating support places to be delivered. These areas are;

- Newry;
- Lisburn, Downpatrick and Ards;
- Moyle; and
- Limavady, Derry / Londonderry and Strabane.

Some of these additional services are also based within areas with a high rural population and may help support rural customers remain within their homes and communities.

We have committed to ensuring a minimum spend of Supporting People programme funding through floating support at 15.5% for 2019/20 and will aim to increase this to 16% in 2020/21 subject to budget.

We will produce an evidence-based assessment of need for housing support services to inform future planning for the Supporting People Programme. We are currently developing a new Supporting People Strategy which aims to direct and coordinate our activities for some of our most vulnerable customers, including older people.

Assistive technology

Assistive Technology has a key role to play in enabling older people to remain at home and also improve their living conditions. Given the availability and relatively low cost of some 'plug and play' assistive technologies, this can now be seen as a viable and realistic solution to support some people to remain in their homes or to tackle loneliness and social isolation.

In 2018 we launched an Assisted Living pilot scheme which aimed to improve the flexibility, mobility, social interaction and security for a pilot of 18 households with elderly, disabled or vulnerable tenants. We used technology for communication and control of smart devices including lighting, power sockets systems, thermostat and monitoring devices for the benefit of the elderly living alone.

Evaluations of the pilots are being carried out from a number of perspectives. Occupational Therapists will evaluate from a customer perspective, the social enterprise who supplied the equipment will evaluate from an installation, training and support perspective and the Housing Executive will evaluate the project from a research perspective.

We will consider the findings of these evaluations and consider if assistive technology can have a greater role to play through our work in sustaining and supporting tenancies, reducing fear of crime for older people and even supporting tenants manage health conditions such as dementia.

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Planning for the Future – High level Action Plan			
Supporting Independent Living		**Lead Department**	**Target Date**
1.	We will explore other methods of construction (e.g. offsite construction of pods) for our major adaptations process and consider the benefits this may have for older people.	Asset Management	2020/21
2.	When delivering our planned maintenance programme and response maintenance service we will take the needs of our older tenants into account to ensure the home meets their needs, where possible.	Asset Management	Annually
3.	We will deliver an enhanced major and minor adaptations service to support independent living for our customers, including older people. We have a commitment through our Corporate Plan to reduce end to end times for the major adaptation process.	Asset Management	Annually
4.	We will use a variety of methods to promote our Disabled Facilities Grants process and again we have a commitment in our Corporate Plan to aim to further improve end to end times for our Disabled Facilities Grants for our customers, including older people (against 2018/19 baseline performance).	Regional Services	Annually
5.	Subject to funding, we will continue to administer a Boiler Replacement and Affordable Warmth grant schemes to benefit a range of our customers, including older people.	Regional Services	Annually (subject to budget)
6.	We will aim to reduce Fuel Poverty through partnership working for our oil buying clubs and through providing energy advice and assistance.	Regional Services	Annually
7.	We will increase the use of Floating Support to 16% of the overall budget during 2020/21 and will increase the number of floating support services for older people.	Regional Services	2020/21
8.	We will explore the use assistive technology has to play in supporting independent living and sustaining and supporting tenancies.	Landlord Services	Annually
9.	We will develop a Strategic Needs Assessment for the Supporting People Programme which will take into account demographic trends for service provision (including older people) to inform how we deliver services.	Regional Services	2020/21

Theme 2 - Promoting and Maintaining People's Dignity

One of The Executive Office's Active Ageing Strategy's strategic aims is 'Dignity' with an outcome that states "Older people's dignity and human rights are effectively safeguarded." The concept of dignity for older people is often associated with the compassionate care by people with the right skills and knowledge to care for them and who do not patronise, objectify or ignore their rights.

Alongside this it is also about enabling the person to feel valued, independent, safe, secure and supported in their home, community and wider society and ensuring that any services we design, manage or deliver support this.

It is, however, important to note that older people are not a homogenous group and have the diversity of needs and characteristics of society as a whole and therefore the principles of dignity apply irrespective of age and are applicable to all society.

People of any age can experience a variety of housing issues that can have a detrimental impact on their physical and mental health. Issues such as homelessness, affordability, fear of crime/anti-social behaviour and domestic violence if not addressed can have long term impacts on the physical and mental health of individuals. These housing related issues can also disproportionately affect older people who may be more vulnerable and may be socially isolated, without a support network or with a disability. These may be further compounded by a number of age related issues such as dementia or frailty.

We will continue to provide services and assistance to uphold and maintain the dignity of our customers and tenants through the range of services we deliver for all customers, as well as those specifically aimed at our older customers. We will do this through a range of methods including:

- Contributing to the physical and built environment in managing our homes and delivering the Social Housing Development Programme;
- Providing support to vulnerable older people;
- Delivering our housing management policy and procedures; and
- Exploring and delivering new models and services for older people.

We interact with older people on many levels including visiting them in their homes. In addition to those housing services we provide, we are also very conscious of our safeguarding duties and we work in partnership with a wide range of public, statutory and voluntary organisations to ensure that we fulfil these duties to their fullest. We have a safeguarding policy in place.

Supporting People

Supporting People (SP) plays a key role in promoting, enabling and protecting the

dignity of vulnerable people and as outlined in Theme 1, helps people to live independently in the community or in a range of sheltered or supported accommodation options. The SP programme has four key thematic groups which are Older People, Disability, Homelessness and Younger People.

The SP Programme is delivered through a wide range of delivery partners, including statutory bodies, housing associations, private sector companies and voluntary and community organisations.

We work with all our partners to maximise the outcome for each customer to;

- help them develop domestic/life skills;
- establish social contacts and activities;
- gain access to other services;
- set up and maintain a home/tenancy; and
- find other accommodation and maintain the safety and security of the dwelling among other things.

We will further explore options for pilots of other support such as 'Homeshare' which aims to realise a number of benefits simultaneously for older and younger people. This project pairs older people who need low level support with younger people who provide companionship and low level support in exchange for an affordable place to live.

We will continue to explore a range of accommodation based support models for older people such as 'Hub and Spoke' or 'Extra Care' models to ensure that older people have the appropriate care and support in place, when they need them, to allow them to live with dignity and remain as independent as possible.

To ensure that services are targeted to meet need we will produce an evidence-based assessment of need for housing support services to inform future planning for the Supporting People Programme.

Dementia Friendly

As people live longer, more and more people are likely to develop and live sizeable portions of their lives with dementia. These changes are often small to start with but can have a severe impact on a person's daily life and ultimately will remove their ability to live independently.

Dementia is now the leading cause of death in the UK.[29]There are 850,000 people estimated to be living with dementia in the UK and 38% of the population know a family member or a friend living with dementia. It is estimated that one million people

[29] https://www.dementiastatistics.org/statistics-about-dementia/prevalence/

in the UK will have dementia by 2021[30] and this is predicted to increase to two million by 2050.

New models of housing have been, or are being developed in response to this with some high-quality housing specifically for those with dementia having been developed. New 'Household Models' of retirement type developments are also currently being developed in Northern Ireland to provide care for those who are frail or who have dementia.

What is the Household Model?

- The Household Model is a therapeutic approach to dementia care that focuses on the emotions of people living with dementia and believes that people living with dementia can thrive well in a nurturing environment which may reduce their anxiety and distress;
- Staff are recruited based on their emotional intelligence and there is the removal of institutional features and the 'us and them' approach such as staff wearing uniforms, medicine trolleys and rigid task-based routines;
- The Household Model aims to create "home" for those living with dementia by developing small household living, grouping people together at a similar point of their dementia experience, in a family-like environment;
- Homes are filled with life and colour – homes are filled with people's life history and lived experiences; and
- There is greater freedom for people living in the home to do more for themselves and feel less restricted and staff have flexible more relaxed routines to support this.

Through our work we are regularly engaging and interacting with tenants and customers in their home through some of our key frontline housing functions. Our Housing Advisors, Patch Managers and Maintenance Staff have regular and direct contact with customers who may be impacted by Dementia.

We recognise the opportunity and responsibility that we have to promote dignity for our tenants and customers impacted by Dementia. In partnership with Alzheimer's Society we launched an award winning Dementia Friendly Pilot in the South Down Area. This Pilot raised awareness, provided training for staff and offered practical support to those and the family of those impacted by Dementia.

We established links with local Health Trusts and Dementia Navigators[31] and developed a referral process which enabled frontline staff to visit the tenant's homes and offer practical advice and support as well as providing a 'Dementia Friendly

[30] https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/policy-and-influencing/dementia-uk-report

[31] Dementia Navigators are based in all five Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) in Northern Ireland. Their role is to provide vital information and support – This can be face to face or over the telephone. They can also provide vital signposting to other services to ensure people living with dementia can live as full a life as possible.

Pack' to encourage tenancy sustainment. The pack now includes a dementia friendly calendar clock, dementia friendly telephone internal signage, front and back door key fobs, a whiteboard and information at both a national and local level.

The success of this Pilot has now led to a full roll-out across our Landlord Services division with a large number of frontline staff volunteering to become 'Dementia Champions' and be trained by the Alzheimer's Society to deliver Dementia Friendly Workshops across Northern Ireland. By the end of 2020 our network of Area Offices will be fully Dementia Friendly.

As part of our Dementia Friendly service we will adopt a dementia friendly approach to our Response Maintenance service which will incorporate dementia friendly design minor adaptations as well as providing the opportunity to note any outstanding issues or repairs in the customer's home when our Dementia Champions and Maintenance Officers visit. Dementia friendly design for minor adaptations includes contrasting colours for toilet seats and grab handrails (for better visibility), options of glass fronted kitchen cupboards and dementia friendly lever taps are all examples of dementia friendly design options currently offered as part of the scheme.

We will continue to develop this approach and further increase awareness and our understanding of dementia across our network of local offices to support independence and dignity for tenants who are impacted by dementia and evaluate the impact of this.

JAM (Just A Minute) Card

JAM Card's allow people with a learning difficulty, autism, dementia or communication barriers to tell others that they need 'just a minute' discretely and easily. We will commence this pilot in our North Regional Office across a broad range of our functions. We will provide training and roll this in across the organisation. Once completed, it will tag the organisation as a 'JAM friendly' organisation. This service is for all of our customers including older people.

Fear from Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Whilst the majority of our estates are safe and popular places to live, we recognise that nuisance and anti-social behaviour are real issues that impact on communities and individuals.

Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour is a key concern, particularly for our older customers and tenants and can have serious detrimental impacts on older people. These include loneliness and social isolation, impact negatively on mental health and confidence and also impacts upon their right to enjoy their home and their tenancy.

We offer a high-quality community safety service for our tenants, customers and communities. We adopt a case management approach which is consistent for all our diverse client groups and does not focus on any one specific group or type of anti-

social behaviour. We will launch and deliver our new Community Safety Strategy 2020-2023 which includes considering the needs of an ageing population. The Strategy aims to tackle fear of crime issues for those older groups and will support projects that will tackle the fear of crime and social isolation and will promote intergenerational engagement and activities.

The Community Safety team fund a number of initiatives to a range of groups, agencies and partnerships across Northern Ireland. Currently a number of these funded initiatives are specifically aimed at reducing the fear of crime for older people or keeping them safe in their homes.

There is no specific allocated budget or targeting initiatives for various customer groups and services may change on an annual basis.

We will aim to reduce feelings of loneliness, reduce feelings of isolation and reduce feelings of vulnerability and connect our tenants and customers to their local communities and services by addressing ASB through initiatives such a 'Good Morning' telephone service.

Over the last number of years and in conjunction with other organisations, we have contributed to the funding and delivery of Good Morning Services. The main aim is to befriend older and vulnerable people with a morning telephone call to help those who are isolated but can also provide reassurance and the ability to talk to anyone about feelings of vulnerability, loneliness and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Analysis was carried out on the Social Return On Investment (SROI) for our 'Good Morning Down' project which indicated for every £1 spent, social return on investment amounts to £4.61.We will regularly analyse the range of anti-social behaviour complaints across all categories to help shape our services going forward.

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Promoting and Maintaining People's Dignity – High level Action Plan			
		Lead Department	**Target Date**
1.	We will explore new models of accommodation and housing related support services for a range of older people, including the potential and feasibility of 'Extra Care' or 'hub and spoke' principles for housing, for older people in Northern Ireland.	Regional Services	2020/21
2.	We will carry out and explore pilots that may assist older people to be supported in their home.	Landlord Services/Regional Services	Annually
3.	We will continue to increase awareness and understanding of dementia across our network of local offices.	Landlord Services	2020/21
4.	We will adopt a dementia friendly approach to a number of our services including response maintenance and adaptations.	Landlord Services	2020/21
5.	We will provide communication support to all our customers, including older people, when they request it.	Corporate Services	Annually
6.	We will work with a range of partners and statutory organisation's to deliver a high quality Community Safety Service (which includes the needs of an ageing population based on demographic trends) that addresses hate crime and anti-social behaviour in our estates.	Housing Services	2020/21 – 2023/24
7.	Subject to funding we will continue to deliver and fund a range of community safety initiatives specifically targeted at older people where we can as well as continuing to deliver intergenerational projects.	Housing Services	2020/21 – 2023/24
8.	We will regularly analyse the range of anti-social behaviour complaints across all categories to help shape our services going forward.	Housing Services	Annually
9.	We will increase the use of Floating Support to 16% of the overall budget during 2020/21 and will increase the number of floating support services for older people.	Regional Services	2020/21
10.	We will deliver a new Supporting People Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23 which includes a focus on an older people thematic group.	Regional Services	2020/21

Theme 3 - Housing Advice for Older People

One of the Housing Executive's key statutory responsibilities is to provide housing information and advisory services. This advice and information role is embedded within a wide range of our functions and services and is not just limited to our core housing advice service. We extend this advice to support and enable our older tenants and customers to maximise their income, sustain their tenancy and advise of the full range of services we offer. A wide number of stakeholders, charities and agencies provide services for older people and it would be useful to identify where these are, the type of services that they provide and the geographical areas these services operate in. In addition, this information should be communicated and made available to our staff, stakeholders and our customers.

Based on information in the 2016 House Condition Survey, 86% of those aged 55 years or older own their own home outright and some will have a reasonable level of income. Many older people, or those approaching the 'older' group, do not wish to move from their current home and community they live in. Many may own a valuable asset such as their family home, however due to their income bracket, they may be excluded from financial support for some grants or entitlement to benefits and therefore may have limited options to either move or be supported to remain in their homes by virtue of being 'asset rich, cash poor'.

Following the redesign of our frontline housing services and the development of the Housing Advisor and Patch Management roles, we have been aiming to effectively engage with housing customers to understand their individual needs and explore their housing options by taking a case management approach to provide them with quality housing and support services.

For older customers, these options may fall broadly under offering advice to stay in their current accommodation, or advice to support them to move. We offer, provide or administer a range of services both to help people to remain, or to enable them to move.

Support to stay

We have already outlined some of the services that we offer to tenants and customers to remain in their current accommodation. These options include:

- Managing a grants and adaptation process that allows customers and tenants to increase the accessibility and functionality of their property;
- Our Accessible Housing Register will provide us with information to allow us to plan, allocate and inform our customers;
- Assistive technology which may play a key role in allowing people to remain independent, safe and secure as well as potentially reducing social isolation;
- Floating Support services;
- Energy conservation and advice; and

- Our ongoing funding and partnership working with a range of statutory and community organisations such as Floating Support or through our work in addressing fear of crime for people.

Support to move

The preference of many customers is to remain in their current home, as previously outlined, and for our tenants their overwhelming preference is to remain in their current homes. Based on our 2017 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey, over 92% of those aged 65-84 years of age believe their home is the right size for them with between 3% and 4% of tenants feeling their house is either too small or too big. However, some tenants and customers may wish to move from their current accommodation. Barriers for older people wanting to move from their current accommodation are:

- A lack of affordable alternative options across all tenures and the financial barriers that exist in moving tenure were noted;
- Unfamiliarity or uncertainty with the Private Rented Sector as a tenure choice;
- Many people only make the decision to move when they face a health crisis. Planning ahead is key to enable people to make planned and considered choices before they are forced to move;
- Ensuring clear, impartial and accurate advice, particularly for specialist services with financial or legal implications is also a key consideration. We need to consider the specific needs of customers in rural areas where there is a lack of appropriate and size specific accommodation and reduced choice;
- Practicalities with the physical move and starting up a new home in any sector were also noted as challenges facing older people wishing to move;
- Of the 'oldest' respondents in the Housing Executive's recent research, those who lived in supported sheltered accommodation recognised that they had no longer been able to remain at home and needed assistance for cooking and cleaning to being able to get out and about;
- In the owner occupied sector, there is a perception that options are limited to releasing equity in their properties but there is a reluctance to give up a family home. Many wish to retain capital in their homes and do not want to change tenure. The nature of existing equity release schemes is that they can be difficult to understand and many people may still be in negative equity having bought or re-mortgaged their homes during the property boom in the early to mid-2000s.

Barriers to moving in later life

As noted in the previous section, the practicalities of moving, downsizing or 'rightsizing' are barriers to people moving. Research conducted on older people moving home[32] noted that this is an exhausting process physically and emotionally at

[32] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/370/37008.htm#footnote-222

any age, particularly for people who may have less energy, poorer health and may feel overwhelmed by decluttering family homes. This is compounded by the fact that people may not consider housing options for later life and often look towards this when they are 75 years or older or are forced to do so, but may be less capable.

For our tenants, the Housing Selection Scheme provides scope to apply for a transfer or mutual exchange (depending on circumstances), however, the challenges associated with moving and decluttering still remain. There are examples of organisations in Northern Ireland who do provide support to older people for moving home, such as decluttering and packing, however this is not offered on a large scale throughout Northern Ireland. Greater availability and development of these types of services may be useful for older people who do wish to move.

Tenancy Sustainment

Customer support is everything we do to help our customers prepare for, look after, afford, maintain, enjoy and achieve a sense of well-being in their homes, and to prevent the tenure of that home from coming to a premature end. This support may be delivered directly through specific landlord activities, or part of wider organisational programmes which empower customers to manage their own housing situation. The successful outcome of this support is tenancy sustainment.

Many tenancy sustainment initiatives span across the range of services we deliver including assessing and allocating housing need, tackling fuel poverty, major and minor adaptations, community involvement and through our social enterprise programme.

Our Customer Support and Tenancy Sustainment Strategy 2019-22 is currently out for consultation until March 2020 and provides more detail on our planned activities to support customers remain in their homes.

In addition to the above, we will provide money support and budgeting advice by delivering our 'Making Your Money Work' service to improve the ability of our tenants and other customers to manage money well both day to day and through significant life events and to handle periods of financial difficulty. We will continue to promote access to Money Advice and Debt services and establish links with the Consumer Council and other advice sector organisations and work together on pilot projects and innovations.

We will provide housing support, information and advice in varying formats to engage different target audiences including older people. We will aim to target loneliness and social isolation for older people in the communities we serve.

Social Enterprise

Our Social Enterprise Strategy helps to support the development and sustainability of local communities. A key objective is to create opportunities for social enterprises to deliver outcomes which impact positively on the local community which will in turn

transform and improve people's lives and wellbeing. Social enterprises can play a vital role in sustainable job creation, in facilitating social integration, providing local services that meet many social needs and mobilise community resources to develop innovative local solutions.

Our Social Enterprise Team currently fund a number of services which both directly and indirectly benefit older people in a number of ways. Through our first Social Enterprise Strategy 2015-18, investment of £1.4 million supported a wide range of initiatives including a women's centre where our funding assisted in the purchase of a kiln and moulds leading to cross community work taking place with senior citizens. We also provided funding to several groups for sewing machines to establish local social enterprises, keeping alive the local skills of needlework and dress-making. These low cost, high impact initiatives are beneficial both to the individual but also in their wider impact of creating vibrant and sustainable communities.

We will continue to explore options for social enterprises to practically support and assist older people in the local communities beyond the remit of our standard tenancy agreement.

Over the life of our last Social Enterprise Strategy, we aided the establishment of almost 90 social enterprises and the creation of more than 150 new jobs as well as providing training opportunities for over 1,800 participants as well 940 volunteering opportunities, many of these benefited older people. An independent external evaluation of the programme also found that for every £1 invested during our first strategy, there was a £5.02 value of the social return. Our new Social Enterprise Strategy 2020-24, once launched, will continue our work in partnership with local communities in a 'ground up' approach to identify and develop new or expand existing social enterprises and services.

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Providing Housing Advice for Older People – High level Action Plan			
		Lead Department	**Target Date**
1.	We will further develop our Housing Advice service to provide better information and support services for older people.	Housing Services	Annually
2.	In order to better understand the range, type and number of services available for older people we will continue to map and communicate these on our website as an information source.	Housing Services/ Regional Services	2020/21
3.	We will deliver a range of money and debt advice services for our customers and tenants (including older people) to maximize their incomes and support them in their housing choice.	Housing Services	Annually
4.	We will provide housing support, information and advice in varying formats to engage different target audiences, including older people about key housing related issues.	Housing/Regional & Corporate Services	Annually
5.	We will work to overcome digital barriers for our tenants.	Housing Services	Annually
6.	We will work with communities to identify, develop and maximise the impact of our Social Enterprise services that benefit older people.	Housing Services	Annually

Theme 4 - Promoting Participation

Engaging, enabling and empowering communities has been at the core of what we do as an organisation and we will continue to involve tenants, residents and leaseholders to make improvements in their estates that can benefit everyone socially, environmentally or economically.

Our Community Involvement framework is firmly embedded within our communities and we connect our tenants, residents and leaseholders through our various Housing Community Networks and also through our hard to reach groups. Our Community Involvement Strategy also promotes and encourages those within the communities we serve to get involved and help shape our services.

Loneliness

Preventing loneliness and social isolation is key to supporting and enabling people to live active and fulfilling lives. The role of tackling loneliness is embedded within many aspects of what we do.

As previously noted, loneliness is an individual's negative perception of the quality or quantity of their social relationships. Loneliness is popularly associated with ageing and the various life events that older people experience such as retirement, ill health or bereavement, however recent research has found that loneliness can affect people of all ages. The Office of National Statistics has noted that almost 10% of people aged 16-24 were "always or often" lonely[33] and that this was three times higher than people aged 65 or older.

In 2019, a House of Commons briefing paper titled 'Tackling Loneliness'[34] was published and outlined characteristics that have been potentially linked to an increased risk of loneliness. Some of these groups include people who are retired, have been widowed, have a long term disability, are not part of a social organisation or now live alone, particularly if they have been used to a busier home.

Loneliness can have a severe detrimental impact on people's health:

- The impact of loneliness can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day;[35]
- Loneliness is associated with depression, sleep problems, impaired cognitive health, heightened vascular resistance, hypertension, psychological stress and mental health problems;
- The Northern Ireland Health Survey 2017/18 noted that up to 13% of those over the aged of 65 felt lonely 'all or most of the time';

[33] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/lonelinesswhatcharacteristicsandcircumstancesareassociatedwithfeelinglonely/2018-04-10#main-points

[34] https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8514/CBP-8514.pdf

[35] http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland/information-advice/health-wellbeing/loneliness/

- Researchers have put a financial price on the "epidemic of loneliness", estimating it costs £6,000 per person in health costs and pressure on local services[36];
- However the London School of Economics study of older people says that for every £1 spent in preventing loneliness there are £3 of savings in health costs.

Loneliness is increasingly being recognised as a societal problem by national and local government and we have a number of planned initiatives and activities to help address this for our tenants and customers.

Staying in Touch

We recognise that using digital services is not the preferred method to contact the Housing Executive for many customers. Some presently lack the access, tools or desire to use technology such as the internet or computers. We will continue to communicate with these customers in more traditional ways, including through telephone, written and face to face contact. Across all Housing Executive tenancies, 62% of respondents have access to the internet at home or elsewhere. Our 2017 CTOS shows that the older a HRP was, the less likely they were to have access to the internet; particularly for households with HRPs who were aged between 60-64 (53%) or 65 years or older. (30%)

Research[37] has demonstrated clear benefits for increasing older customer's digital capability where we can. The use of technology for enabling social contact and participation can be very successful providing adequate support, reassurance and assistance is made available for those who require it. The internet can be used as a method for increasing and maintaining social contact, but can also provide more choice and options for recreational activities such as booking holidays and trips, accessing movies and books as well as reading or learning opportunities. We will provide opportunities and information to increase digital capability for those who want it, however we also recognise the potential challenges and risks for some vulnerable customers using online services.

We will work with partners in order to increase participation and address social isolation. One example of this is the ONSIDE project, a cross border community support service to support disabled people who are socially isolated. We will partner with Disability Action Northern Ireland, Supporting Communities and the Centre for Independent Living to deliver this cross border project. This project will use assistive technology, develop personalised ongoing social isolation and health programmes and create a regional digital disability community which will highlight disability health

[36] http://www.lse.ac.uk/business-and-consultancy/consulting/assets/documents/making-the-economic-case-for-investing-in-actions-to-prevent-and-or-tackle-loneliness-a-systematic-review.pdf
[37] https://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Evidence_Review_Technology.pdf?dtrk=true

and focused wellbeing services and community asset and engagement opportunities. We will monitor and evaluate the impact and benefits of this project on an ongoing basis. It is planned to benefit 1,125 people in Northern Ireland, some of which will be older persons.

We will continue to support and develop a range of intergenerational projects where we can which increase participation among older people in the community and benefit both older and younger people in a number of ways through our community networks, social enterprises and community safety initiatives.

Community Participation

We have a number of community involvement and participation forums which allow customers to help inform and shape our services as well as holding us to account. We operate a number of tiers of our Housing Community Network across all areas and alongside Disability Action we operate our Disability Forum. Our Rural Residents Forum operates across our local offices and aims to identify and address specific rural housing issues. We recognise the importance of these mechanisms to better understand, engage with and deliver services.

We acknowledge the importance and value of a range of other community based initiatives such as community gardens, allotments and tea dances that we fund as ways for older people in our communities to increase ways that they can participate, engage and enjoy the later years of their life. We will continue to be informed and guided from the ground up for community based services and initiatives directed at older people.

Based within local communities our Men's Sheds and Hen's Sheds provide opportunities for people, including older people to meet new people and make new friendships. In addition to this they provide the opportunity to break isolation and reduce loneliness for older people within our communities. Many of these sheds provide opportunities to bring people together, promote social inclusion and intergenerational learning.

The Housing Executive supports a number of initiatives that can encourage older people to lead more active and healthier lives. Through our Social Enterprise programme, we recently funded Hanwood Gym in East Belfast £25,000 from the Social Enterprise programme to update its gym equipment so that it can attract more users and offer GP referral programmes and other fitness courses to benefit local residents, particularly older people both in terms of healthy ageing, but also in terms of community participation.

A recent independent evaluation of the Social Enterprise Strategy indicated that it positively affects (according to participants) partnership working, collaboration, social isolation and resilience and brings the potential for accessing more affordable local services. For example, 82% of participants identified reduced social isolation, 85% identified increased social resilience and 85% identified increased health and mental

well-being (mental, emotional, physical and social) as a result of engaging with or participating in a social enterprise which had been supported by the Housing Executive.

Through our planning and placeshaping role we also influence and help shape the neighbourhood characteristics to increase physical amenities and transport linkages for the benefit of older people and to plan for the future delivery of services for sustainable communities. The delivery of age-friendly initiatives and policies can simultaneously benefit other population groups. Good transport linkage and infrastructure and safer, barrier free environments can benefit those with children or mobility issues and help to support intergenerational opportunities and engagement which will ultimately benefit older people now, and in the future.

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Promoting Participation – High level Action Plan			
		Lead Department	**Target Date**
1.	We will provide opportunities for older people to increase their digital capability.	Housing Services	Annually
2.	Through our Community Involvement functions, we will encourage older people to develop, shape and inform the services and opportunities that we provide for them to enable them to participate, engage and enjoy the later years of their life.	Housing Services	Annually
3.	We will work with partners in order to increase participation and help address social isolation/loneliness.	Housing Services	Annually
4.	We will continue to support and develop a range of intergenerational projects through community networks, social enterprises or community safety initiatives.	Housing Services	Annually
5.	We will continue to work with others to support existing and develop new healthy ageing initiatives.	Housing Services	Annually
6.	We will continue to be informed and guided from the 'ground up' for community based services and initiatives directed at older people.	Housing Services	Annually

Appendix 1 List of Useful Documents/Web Pages

Housing Executive Corporate Plan 2017/18 – 2020/21

Housing Investment Plans

2018 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey Main Report and 2018 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey Summary Report

Housing and Older People: Housing Issues, Needs and Aspirations

2016 House Condition Survey

Homelessness Strategy 2017-22

Community Involvement Strategy 2018-23

Supporting People

Rural Strategy & Action Plan 2016-20

Home Energy Conservation Authority Report

2018/19 Annual Report

Please note this is not an exhaustive list. Please refer to our website at www.nihe.gov.uk for more information.

DRAFT

Housing Executive

CS-198-11-19

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Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE) draft Older Person's Housing Strategy 2020/21 – 2025/26

Belfast City Council response – September 2020

Belfast City Council ("the Council"), welcomes the opportunity to respond to this draft strategy. For ease of reference the Council has followed the suggested structure of the four thematic themes and associated actions plans in preparing this submission. In addition the Council has also included some broader introductory and concluding comments within its submission. In drafting our response we have also sought, and included input, from the Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP) and members of the All Party Older People's Group.

Vision

The Strategy states that the NIHE vision is to:-

*'enable older people to live as independently as possible with dignity; with opportunities and options to meet their housing needs; and to be supported to engage and participate in community life to create vibrant sustainable communities***.'**

The Council having engaged with older people's representatives do not disagree with this vision. However, having engaged with older people's representatives and also through our previous consultations with older people, as part of our Age-friendly Belfast Plan we believe that reference to the importance of supporting older people to **'plan for the future'** is an issue and commitment that requires greater prominence.

Therefore, the Council would suggest that the vision would be strengthened by including a reference to planning for the future. The following additional text below would provide for this important issue within your strategic vision:-

Our vision is **'to enable older people to plan for their future housing needs',** *live as independently as possible with dignity; with opportunities and options to meet their housing needs; and to be supported to engage and participate in community life to create vibrant sustainable communities.'*

Measuring Success

The Council agree with the approach being suggested by NIHE in terms of measuring the success of this strategy. However, it is unclear from the document how NIHE and other stakeholders will measure how people are better off as a result of the strategy and its associated action plans. In line with the wider public sector there would be merit in using an outcomes based accountability approach.

The majority of the measures outlined in the consultation document are outputs or procedural measures and not 'better off' measures; consequently they will be limited in evidencing the benefits the strategy may have on the quality of life of older people. The Council believes that these measures of success could be significantly strengthened by being outcome focused, emphasising the impact of the strategy and in particular how it will result in measurable change to the issues facing older people.

FOUR KEY STRATEGIC THEMES

The Council agree with the four themes outlined in the strategy document and particularly welcome the detail provided and focus in relation to Theme 1 - Planning for the Future, in light of our comments above.

THEME 1 - PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Under this theme there are two distinct strands: Exploring Housing Options for Older People, which looks at different housing models; and Supporting Independent Living, which looks at ways to assist those who can, and wish to, remain in their own home.

Council response:

The Council agrees with the actions suggested within this theme, but would make the following comments/suggestions:

- The 2017 Age-friendly Belfast survey reported that almost half of older people in Belfast (46%) were not aware of housing options as they got older. In addition, work undertaken by the Council in relation to consultations on the Belfast Agenda and the emerging Local Development Plan highlighted the need for a particular focus on increasing access to suitable housing across the city.

- The numbers of older people in housing stress or who are homeless across Belfast indicates that more radical action is necessary. We would be concerned that these issues contribute to poor physical and mental health. It is not clear from the draft strategy that there will be the funding or capacity to adapt the housing stock quickly enough or develop alternative options to meet the changing needs of older people.

- The Council would also like to see more consideration of actions being undertaken by NIHE with the private rented sector. Research has shown that some of the poorest older people live in this sector and these numbers are likely to increase. Collaboration and partnership in this area would help to combat emerging issues.

- There is also a clear need for NIHE and other housing providers to do more with older people and their families to plan ahead. The NIHE could work in partnership with key stakeholders such as COPNI or Age NI on campaigns to raise awareness of this issue and help people to start planning for their future housing. Adopting a proactive approach would reduce undue stress and worry for older people and their families.

- It seems likely from the NIHE research quoted in the consultation report that a significant percentage of older persons are under-occupying their homes. Alongside the results of the 2017 tenant survey that found 92% of 65-84 year olds were happy that their accommodation was the right size for them, this raises questions regarding the assertion that properties under-occupied by older people are likely to be released. Furthermore, the report also notes that when older people do consider moving, they would prefer to remain within a narrow radius (less than 5 miles) of their existing accommodation. These details together highlight the importance of planning and delivering a range of well-designed and well-located housing for older people and services that are developed in consultation with and garner the support of older people.

- It is vital that good quality smaller homes are provided in the right locations. The Council recognise the need for a greater provision of mixed housing and as such we have proposed new planning policies

within our draft Plan Strategy that are designed to; encourage a broader mix of housing generally (Policy HOU6), particularly smaller homes across all tenures; to require more accessible and adaptable accommodation (Policy HOU7);and to manage the delivery of specialist residential accommodation (Policy HOU8), including sheltered housing, extra care housing and care homes. We welcome NIHE's support in the delivery and implementation of such policies to ensure that housing of the future meets the need of all residents.

- To date, there has been minimal development of specialised older persons housing for owner occupation or private rental in NI, but this is increasingly being developed by private developers elsewhere and has proven to be very popular. We may therefore see an increasing trend here too and it is vital that NIHE plan for this to ensure that the highest standards are delivered and to support older people in making the best choice.

- The Council's future planning framework proposes to increase the proportion of residential accommodation in Belfast City Centre and, whilst not all locations will be well suited to housing for older people, the City Centre could offer a range of suitable accommodation types in close proximity to a range of services. We would welcome the opportunity to work with NIHE to explore the potential for a range of accommodation options in such locations.

- Alongside this, the research findings within the Strategy also underline the importance of future housing for older people being brought forward in locations in close proximity to existing residential areas and existing local services. This is the approach that the Council's draft Plan Strategy Policy HOU8 seeks to encourage.

- However, reference is made in the consultation to a 'Hub and Spoke' model, whereby sheltered accommodation services (hubs) can offer additional support services and facilities (spokes) to residents of the scheme and to the wider community. Whilst the aim of ensuring that new services provided in any specialist development are open and accessible to the wider community, this particular model has the potential to jar with criterion b) of our draft Policy HOU8, which would assess the location of specialist accommodation with regard to the proximity of existing local services and facilities (as opposed to such services being provided on site). Whilst utilisation of existing services may not always be possible, it may be beneficial to consider the potential to deliver supporting services at existing service centres, such as local neighbourhood centres or health centres, which are easily accessible from new developments.

- The consultation notes that NIHE are currently working in partnership with the Department for Communities on a pilot scheme incorporating the Housing and Ageing Population Panel for Innovation, (HAPPI) principles into reconfigured housing stock. This, in conjunction with the development of an accessible housing register for social homes, indicates the level of importance attributed to meeting the needs of an ageing population, with the view expressed that 'if it meets the needs of older people, it meets the needs of everyone'. One of the action points states that NIHE will work to influence the Lifetime Homes Standards in the private sector and this aligns well with the Council's approach to accessible and adaptable housing outlined in Policy HOU7. This policy also recognises the need to close the accessibility gap between social rented and other tenures of housing, which will increase choice of accommodation and tenure for older people.

- Similarly, the Council also welcome the action point to increase provision of wheelchair standard homes in the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) from 7% to 10% by the end of 2020/21 (in line with draft PfG). This action also aligns closely with the Council's draft Policy HOU7.

- From an equality perspective the Council also welcome the use of the HAPPI principles for home designs as many older people not only have older children living at home, they also have caring responsibilities

for older parents and grandchildren. In some instances, they are primary carers for grandchildren who would otherwise have been taken into care.

THEME 2 – PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING PEOPLES'S DIGNITY

This theme sets out the services that NIHE currently provide and looks at ways to develop new and existing services to promote and maintain the dignity of our tenants and customers.

Council response:

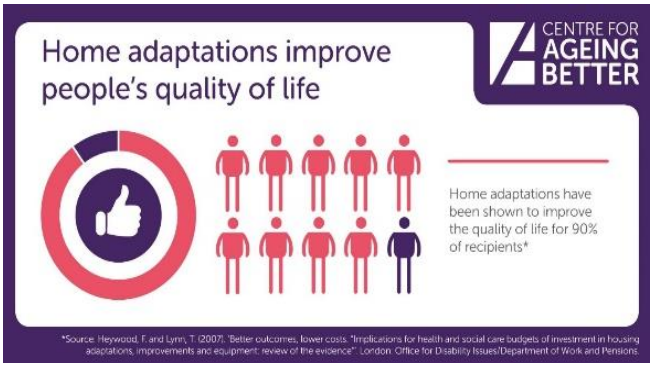
The Council agrees with the actions suggested, but would make the following comments/suggestions:

- We support the idea of a comprehensive handyperson service allowing older people to maintain their homes and thus maintain their independence for longer. The Belfast Safer Homes Scheme, run by Bryson supported by Belfast City Council and the Public Health Agency, is now well established. However, it does not cover a range of frequently requested services such as gardening and decorating, which would make a significant difference for older people being able to live independently.

- There is a need for greater investment in Home Improvement Agencies and this has been included in recommendations outlined in the All Party Parliamentary Group on Ageing and Older people Inquiry into Decent and Accessible Homes for older people, summer 2019.

- The Council welcome the changes and improvements planned for the Disabled Facilities Grants. In our experience older people tell us that these grants need to be promoted more, easier to use, and both waiting and delivery times need to be reduced**.** A quote received at one of our older people's forums stated that, **"***Promotion of grants, simpler processes and short times all vital, older people are not aware of grants available and/or feel it is too long and too much hassle to apply for one".* Therefore, it is important that this progress is monitored to ensure that the planned changes results in measurable improvements.

- The Centre for Ageing Better infographic below states that home adaptations improve the quality of life for 90% of recipients. This highlights the importance and value of home adaptations which can very often can be undertaken without significant costs. There also needs to be a flexibility around smaller scale adaptations which allows these to be carried out quickly without causing major upheaval to the recipients.



- Through our previous engagement with our Health & Social Care partners, we are aware of their concerns that the discharge of older people from hospital can be delayed in some cases pending home adaptations. In these situations there must be greater flexibility based on the needs of the specific individual that could resolve these issues quickly and not lead to undue delayed discharge from hospitals or other care settings. This is particularly of concern if there is another Covid19 surge, as delayed discharges can lead to a greater risk of infection, physical 'deconditioning' and mental health problems with long term consequences for the older person.

- The Council would also recommend that the NIHE links in with partners in health, universities and councils to understand the significant emerging research and innovation being undertaken within the city in relation to assistive technology. This technology can be used to develop innovative adaptations to a property which can support older people to continue to live independently in their own homes

- Belfast Warm and Well Scheme is a partnership approach reporting to the Community Planning Living Here Board and aimed at addressing Fuel Poverty. The scheme provides a coordinated single point of assessment combining NEA, Make the Call and the City Council Affordable Warmth Team.

Affordable Warmth Scheme

- The Strategy references the Affordable Warmth Scheme which is a scheme that the Council play a critical role in across the city. This scheme covers a whole house approach in ensuring energy efficiency which includes replacement boiler, insulation (cavity wall, roof space and solid wall) and replacement windows. The scheme is also fully funded.

- There is set criteria for the Affordable Warmth scheme but it is not restrictive for older people as being over 65 is part of the eligibility criteria. However, the Council do believe it is restrictive for older couples as the overall household income is taken into account and consideration should be given to raising the income threshold for couples or families.

- It is not clear what evidence there is to suggest that the scheme isn't reaching those most at risk. The scheme may not keep pace with the increase in the number of older people but the main issue is consistency and funding for councils to help deliver the scheme and the set ratio of 80:20 as it is targeted scheme. If the council had more resources available to support this scheme then we could deliver more referrals. However, given the funding uncertainty around this scheme this is very difficult.

- NIHE schemes to improve their own stock will 'skip' those homes purchased by former tenants. A more long term systematic approach is needed to fuel poverty which recognises it as a public health and community planning issue. This would involve comprehensive large scale retro-fitting public and private sector homes to improve insulation, windows and heating systems and making the gradual transition to alternative heating as easy as possible for those on low incomes. This would have the added benefits of being one of the most effective ways to reduce carbon emissions and job creation. Many NIHE homes that were purchased by tenants are often left with old gas boilers behind the fireplace and single glazed windows and were never included in NIHE schemes due to the householder purchasing the house. These older people can very rarely afford to improve the house themselves and should be considered in any local schemes.

- The Council agree with a long term systematic approach is needed to support appropriate home adaptations and improvement, this should include windows as this is a costly measure. The

Affordable Warmth scheme is the only scheme available for home owners to get help with this, but as a single measure we are unable to help due to prioritisation.

- The Council also supports the concept of dementia friendly homes embedded in dementia friendly communities referenced in the strategy. The Council would welcome further information on the planned programmes in this area and would be keen to work with the NIHE in promoting awareness around this approach.

- The work around energy efficiency and carbon reduction – energy efficiency is discussed but there might be other actions that could be considered, for example the use of renewable energy, moving people away from oil/gas, use of district heating schemes etc that might address fuel poverty (which is reported to be highest among the older generations) and enhanced heating/environment. There are many innovative alternative methods of home heating and cooling available now – more than the traditional movement from oil to gas heating. The Council feel it would be of value to the NIHE to explore the cost benefit analysis of these alternative schemes in greater details to assess their suitability.

THEME 3 – PROVIDING HOUSING ADVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLES

The Council would make the following comments/suggestions in relation to this theme:

- The Council would welcome consideration being given to the introduction of a dedicated older people's contact in NIHE. We believe this approach could improve communications and partnership approaches to providing housing advice. This concept of centralised advice for older people would be very useful to signpost people to the most suitable schemes and offer advice on housing issues.

- The Council believe there is a need to do more with older people and their families in relation to the provision of appropriate and tailored housing advice. NIHE could work in partnership with key stakeholders such as the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland or Age NI on campaigns to help people to start planning for their future housing. We know from engagement with other local authorities that Nottingham City Council for example is working with Age UK on an equity release scheme targeted at older people living in areas of disadvantage. This is quite a compelling example of how partners are working together to help older house owners in areas of disadvantage to make affordable adjustments to their homes –as featured in a presentation at **Home is Where the Heart Is UK Age-friendly Network Conference, 3 June 2020** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AE29zZ-ea7M&feature=youtu.be

- The early response and community based interventions in light of the COVID-19 emergency has highlighted the existence and value of many local community based advice services. The Council believe that NIHE should link to these important and accessible local sources of advice when implementing its strategy.

- While the Council understands the difficulty in defining an older person, as people age at different rates physically and mentally, regardless of this the Council believes that it would be useful to encourage people to think about their current accommodation when they are fit and healthy – and prepare themselves for the future.

- Access to advice and support services is vital. While we appreciate that this strategy focuses primarily on how NIHE will provide the appropriate housing to meet the requirements of older people, it is however crucial that the NIHE cascade this strategic approach in a manner that is person-centred meeting the needs of the individual person and families. NIHE will need to carefully consider the

preventions and interventions that will be put in place as an agency or via its partnerships to ensure that all their tenants have access to support, are aware of that support available and understand how to use it. Older people face many complex challenges and will require access to a broad range of services and support it is vital that these issues are given equal consideration within the strategy and throughout its implementation.

THEME 4 - PROMOTING PARTICIPATION

We agree with the actions suggested and would make the following comments/suggestions:

- Technology and digital inclusion is important for all members of society including older persons and the last few months have shown this. Therefore, it is essential that the NIHE, in considering the provision of appropriate housing for older people, ensure that there is broadband/Wi-Fi in all its housing properties.

- Age Friendly Neighbourhoods are important and the Council support the actions suggested within this strategy document to support the use of outdoor space. We would emphasise that green spaces and well maintained common areas around housing is vital. Benches and well-spaced seating is important for older people and other age groups and whilst we understand some of the community safety concerns which exist, these issues need to be overcome with the support of local communities and innovative solutions.

- Ensuring access to outside space is vital for older people whether this be direct access or balconies. Access to green space/nature/biodiversity for a range of benefits could be expanded within the strategy document to make clear the multiple benefits, not least that it would help reduce flooding and overheating.

- The Council would welcome through this strategic approach the design of inter-generational neighbourhoods which are age- and dementia-friendly. These need to be walkable and will reduce the risk of social isolation and support 'Ageing in Place' from childhood to old age.

- The Council also recognise that shared spaces (if not shared accommodation) can be critical in combatting loneliness. Communal gardens, allotments have often been areas for older people to continue being active and increasing opportunities for local food production and learning. It is widely acknowledged through various sources of research that these types of activities also have a positive impact on mental health.

- The movement of older people through and around the city is crucial in fostering a sense of independence for older people. It is therefore vital that housing is situated in locations that doesn't isolate them from others, services and access to public transport.

- The Council also believe that it is very positive to see within the strategy document, an acknowledgment of the importance of community safety for older and vulnerable adults. These commitments reflect the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership's (PCSP) ethos. It has been our experience through the Belfast PCSP that the NIHE has a flexible approach to the needs of their tenants and are willing to liaise with teams across their whole organisation which has shown them to be strong partners in addressing policing and community safety issues across Belfast.

Concluding comments

While the Council welcome the actions outlined within the document. There is concern that in and of itself

this strategy will be limited in meeting the scale of change facing our population. The Council believe that for the NIHE to achieve the strategic vision set out in this document there is a need for a true partnership approach in terms of planning for and delivery of appropriate housing for older people across the city.

There is a need for common ownership of the issues from the NIHE's and its strategic partners to ensure that the objectives of the strategy are met. The Council is aware that previously there was a joint housing and social care group which existed as forum to discuss the interface between health and NIHE but this group no longer meets. It is the view of the Council that such a forum along with other partnerships that include housing associations, private sector landlords and councils as the local planning authorities can all contribute and all have an important role to play in delivering a joined-up strategic approach to housing for older people, that our older people deserve.

The Council would also like to take this opportunity to highlight to the NIHE that whilst we acknowledge the need to focus on housing for older people, we need fairer housing provisions for all generations across the city. There is a need for an overall increase in the supply of affordable new homes and enhanced measures are required to ensure that those on low or modest incomes have access to them.

The Council prioritises its role in addressing inequalities across the city and within its communities and therefore warmly welcomes the production of this strategy. The Council will seek where possible through Community Planning Partnership and other channels to work with the NIHE in delivering this strategy to address any inequalities faced by our older people in securing and living in appropriate accommodation. Giving all our citizens, including our older generation, more control over the decisions that affect their lives and their communities is a key priority for the Council.

Much work has taken place in the last number of years, under the auspices of community planning, to ensure that the Council and its partners builds up the information and data knowledge of those who live, work and invest in the City. It is fundamental that this strategy document is used as a basis for the council to work with NIHE and other statutory agencies, to understand the nature and scope of the inequalities facing our older people in relation to housing and where they exist work together to develop programmes to target and reduce these inequalities for the greater good.

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 8 September 2020
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive,
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS),

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that were considered and discussed by the Audit & Risk Panel at its September 2020 meeting and present minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to; • Note the key issues arising at the meeting, note the Annual Governance Statement at Appendix 2 and approves the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel of 8 September 2020 at Appendix 1.

3.0	**Main report**
	Key Issues <u>Audit and Risk Panel</u>
3.1	This was the **first virtual meeting of the Audit & Risk Panel**, which was held to consider important year-end reports that had previously been circulated to Panel members in August for comment. Minutes of the meeting are at Appendix 1. <u>Annual Governance Statement and other year-end reports</u>
3.2	The Council has a statutory responsibility to annually prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) as part of the Financial Report.
3.3	The AGS is prepared on the basis of many different processes and sources of assurance, all of which were considered by the Panel at their meeting, including the Head of Audit Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) annual assurance statement (including completion of the annual audit plan for 2019/20), annual assurance statements completed by senior managers, annual review and update of the code of governance, corporate risk management report, annual update on fraud and whistleblowing and various other reports.
3.4	**The Panel reviewed and agreed the draft Annual Governance Statement for the year 2019/20, including the five significant governance issues being disclosed** and the actions to address them. These issues relate to the Council's financial position, digital security, organisational recovery, city and community recovery and the relationship between elected members and officers. The AGS, provided at Appendix 2 for information, forms part of the unaudited statement of accounts which have been certified by the Chief Financial Officer and is subject to review by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) as part of their annual audit. The AGS is to be formally signed by the Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources, the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources when the accounts are being finalised in December 2020.

	Internal Audit and Corporate Risk Management
3.5	The Panel considered the **indicative audit plan for 2020/21** which had been reviewed and updated to take account of the impact of Covid19 and associated assurance needs and noted the need for AGRS to be responsive to the assurance needs of the Council during 2020/21. The Panel agreed that they were content that the revised plan provided them, and therefore Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, with the necessary assurances over the council's risk, control and governance arrangements.
3.6	**The Panel noted the position on delivery of the audit plan for 2019/20** and how Covid19 had impacted on delivery of this plan, with some work being paused and replaced with other higher priority work, including, ensuring that there were proper processes in place to control changes to our financial governance arrangements in the changed working environment and providing advice on various risk and control matters.
3.7	The Panel considered the **Covid-19 risk analysis** and how the corporate risks had been impacted by Covid19, in particular the significant impact on the risk regarding the Councils financial position. The Panel agreed three new corporate risks regarding; planning for potential future lockdowns; organisational recovery and; city and community recovery, and agreed for AGRS to work with officers to support them in assessing both the existing corporate risks and the three new corporate risks and developing appropriate mitigation plans. The Panel also agreed for management to **review and update business continuity plans, to reflect learning to date, by end of October 2020**.
	Corporate Health and Safety, Absence Management and Performance Improvement
3.8	The Panel received year-end reports on corporate health and safety, absence management and performance improvement. The Panel welcomed these updates and in particular the work that is ongoing to ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are in place and support provided to staff in the context of Covid19. The Panel **approved the year end Corporate Performance Assessment 2019-20 and noted the changed arrangements for meeting our performance improvement duty during 2020-21** due to Covid-19, as advised by the Department for Communities.

	National Fraud Initiative
3.9	The Panel noted the report from the NIAO on the most recent National Fraud Initiative Exercise (NFI). **The Panel received a high level update from the Head of AGRS on the specific data matches for the Council and the investigatory work undertaken and noted that no issues of fraud had been identified**. The Panel noted that the exercise had identified two duplicate payments and that monies had been recouped and corrective measures put in place to prevent recurrence. The Panel also noted that there were some issues with locating staff declarations of interest forms and that AGRS were liaising with departments and Legal and Civic Services to ensure these are resolved.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.10	None
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.11	None known at this time.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 8 September 2020 Appendix 2– Draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

Audit and Risk Panel

Tuesday, 8th September, 2020

MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK PANEL

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (in the Chair);
Councillors Carson and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Strategic Director of Finance and Resources;
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS);
Mr. T. Wallace, Head of Finance;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Head of Human Resources;
Mr. M. Whitmore, Audit, Governance and Risk Services Manager;
Mr. L. Mulholland, Audit, Governance and Risk Services Manager;
Mrs. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager;
Ms. H. Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager;
Ms. C. Kane, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

The Audit and Risk Panel noted that it was required to elect a Chairperson for the coming year.

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor O'Hara and

Resolved – that Alderman Rodgers be elected to serve as Chairperson to the Audit and Risk Panel from September, 2020 to June, 2021.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Hussey and McKeown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th March were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Absence Rates - Year Ending March 2020

The Panel considered a report providing information on the absence figures for the financial year 2019/2020. The Head of Human Resources reported that sickness absence, per full-time employee, for that period had been 13.58 days, which was a decrease of 0.13 days compared to absence for the same period last year (13.71). She explained that the corporate target was 12.67 days. The Panel was advised that the absence rate reduced to 13.46 when COVID 19 related absence was discounted, which equated to a decrease of 0.25 days on the previous year.

She explained that there had been a slight decrease in the number of staff with no absence throughout the year, at 37.08% compared to 38.75% last year. The Panel was advised that long term absences had also slightly decreased, with 65.3% of absence classified as long term, compared to 67.44% for the previous year.

The Head of Human Resources explained that five out of the seven departments had met the annual corporate absence target of 12.67 days, which was an improvement on the previous year, when only three out of six departments had met the target.

The Panel was advised that there had been a 20% increase in stress related absence in the Council compared to the previous year. The Head of Human Resources advised that the figures showed that personal stress still accounted for 70% of stress related absence. She outlined that the main reasons for stress related absence in the Council were underlying mental health conditions including depression and anxiety, bereavement, family caring reasons, personal or relationship issues and work issues.

The Members were advised that there had been a significant reduction in days lost due to musculo-skeletal issues, decreasing from 9437.83 days in 2018/19 to 7596.74 days in 2019/20. The Head of Human resources advised that the City and Neighbourhood Services (CNS) Department accounted for approximately 77% of all musculo-skeletal type absence within the council and that the vast majority of musculo-skeletal absence within CNS was attributed to employees in manual roles. She pointed out, however, that only 16% of musculo-skeletal absence was recorded as work related and approximately 49% of all musculo-skeletal absence was attributed to underlying medical conditions.

In respect of disability related absence, 27.46% of absence was recorded as disability related, which was a slight reduction when compared to last year's figure which was 27.93%. She highlighted to the Members that 38.31% was managed as long term, which was a significant reduction when compared to the previous year's figure of 64.6%.

With regards to long term absence management, the Panel was advised that a total of 346 employees were off for more than 20 continuous days. The Members were advised that those 346 employees accounted for 65.3% (18714.46 days) of the total absence for 2019/20. The Panel was provided with an update on Final stage compliance issues which were reported to the Corporate Management Team.

The Members were advised that the Council had been impacted by absence due to COVID 19, mostly during March 2020. A total of 50 employees were recorded as

absent due to COVID19, accounting for a total of 253.94 days (0.9% of the total absence). The Panel was advised that management had been operating in accordance with government and public health guidance since the start of the pandemic and had provided guidance to both management and staff.

The Head of Human Resources advised that a review of the Attendance Policy and Booklet was ongoing and that annual departmental absence action plans were being developed. She pointed out that Corporate HR continued to provide various programmes for employees to assist with absence management.

In response to a query which had been raised by the Panel previously, regarding a rise in absences in Quarter 3 due to infections such as colds and flu, she reported that there had been numerous media reports which showed an eight fold increase in such infections and a surge in demand for GP appointments during that time.

She advised the Members that, in order for the Council to meet the corporate target of 10 days absence per full-time employee by the end of the current council term, a proposed reduction of 9.7% over the next three years was required, with the new annual targets as follows:

Year	Target (Days)
2020/21	12.26
2021/22	11.07
2022/23	10

The Panel noted the information which was provided.

Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager explained that the Corporate Health and Safety Unit was unable to proceed with the usual health and safety performance review for Quarter four in March/April 2020 due to the need to prioritise their resources to respond the emerging impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic. She advised that they hoped to recover the performance monitoring aspect of the Unit's activity at the earliest opportunity.

She reported that the number of employee accidents for quarter four of 2019/2020 was 33, which was 19 less than in the previous quarter. She highlighted that the highest number of accidents had been caused by employees being injured while lifting or carrying.

The Panel was informed that the number of RIDDOR reportable accidents had also decreased by 12 from the last quarter, to 8.

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager reported that there had been a decrease in the number of reported Work Related Violence incidents from the last quarter, from 30 to 27, and the majority of which were of verbal abuse.

She advised that there were 9 non-employee accidents during the quarter, 6 of which were due to slips, trips or falls.

The Panel was provided with details of three complaints which were made to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) by staff during the pandemic in relation to RCV cab screens and Duncrue waste collection and recycling service. The Corporate Health and Safety Manager also explained that the Council's Household Recycling Centre's were inspected after reopening as part of a HSENI planned inspection programme whereby the Inspector had advised that he was pleased with how the sites were operating and that no significant issues were identified.

With regards to Covid-19, the Corporate Health and Safety Manager explained that the Unit had been supporting the Council's Silver Group, Operational Recovery Group and individual service managers throughout the pandemic to comply with all government guidance and to ensure the health and safety of the Council's workers and users. She highlighted that the new corporate roadmap and associated governance process for service recovery included the requirement for the Corporate Health & Safety Unit to quality assure and approve, along with the Trade Unions, Service Covid-19 risk assessments to ensure the effective consideration of health and safety implications.

Noted.

Fraud and Whistleblowing - Annual Report and Policy Update

The Panel considered the Annual Report on the Fraud and Whistleblowing Policy and related arrangements, including the application of the policies during 2019/20.

The Head of AGRS provided the Panel with a high level summary of investigations into alleged fraud and financial impropriety undertaken during 2019/20, including an update on a number of investigations, areas that the investigations related and, completion and outcome of these investigations. In addition, she advised that there had been 4 cases referred to the PSNI during the year.

She also provided the Panel with a high level analysis of whistleblowing concerns received throughout the year including number of concerns received, areas that the concerns related to and, completion and outcome of these investigations.

She explained that a key development to the Council's counter fraud arrangements during 2019/20 had been to assist departments in undertaking a Fraud Risk Assessment. Whilst management was responsible for managing the activities that were at significant risk of fraud and were expected to identify, assess and manage those risks, AGRS worked with management as part of the process. The Members were advised that all departments had completed a fraud risk control template setting out risk areas and current control arrangements to mitigate potential risks. She reported that AGRS had and would incorporate those into fraud risk workshops for those areas across the council that presented the highest fraud risk

AGRS had reviewed key changes to the council's financial governance arrangements during the pandemic with a particular emphasis on potential fraud risks arising from those changes. Furthermore she added there had been a reported increase in fraud risks in recent months, including attempted frauds linked to bank mandate and cheque alterations. Consequently, she explained AGRS would be carrying out a robust

review of the council's corporate fraud risk assessment and departmental fraud risk returns, to identify any emerging or new risks and would develop a detailed action plan as part of the review.

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services pointed out that a key element of the Council's counter-fraud arrangements was its participation in the National Fraud Initiative which was essentially a data matching exercise that involved comparing sets of data against other records held by the same or another body, allowing potentially fraudulent or erroneous payments to be identified, reviewed and, where necessary, investigated. She advised that AGRS, in consultation with Financial Services, had reviewed the majority of matches for the 2019/20 exercise. The Members were advised that all reports had now been investigated and no issues of fraud had been identified. She outlined that there were some outstanding Declarations of Interest forms and that they were continuing to liaise with departments to ensure those were resolved. She explained that they would work with Legal and Civic Services to ensure that Departments and officers were reminded of the circumstances requiring the completion of declarations of interest. She explained that two duplicate payments had been identified and that Financial Services had recouped both payments and had put corrective measures in place to prevent recurrence.

She outlined that a number of minor changes had been made to the Council's Fraud and Whistleblowing policies and associated arrangements. In addition, she explained that the NIAO had recently published a Good Practice Guide on Raising Concerns, which AGRS would review in detail during 2020/2021 and would bring an update report to the next meeting of the Panel.

The Panel noted the updates on fraud, whistleblowing and related cases handled in 2019/20; the ongoing work that was taking place with departments in relation to the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment; the outcomes of the most recent National Fraud Initiative exercise; and approved the updated fraud and whistleblowing policies.

NIAO Report on the National Fraud Initiative (NI) Update

Ms. C. Kane, Director at the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) presented the Audit Office's report on the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) to the Panel.

She explained that the exercise was run every two years, to identify potentially fraudulent and erroneous transactions, using sophisticated computer-based data matching techniques. The Panel was advised that over 80 public bodies had taken part in the sixth run of the exercise in Northern Ireland (NI), including government departments, agencies, non-departmental public bodies, councils and health sector bodies. She explained that NI data was also matched with data held by public sector organisations in England, Scotland and Wales, providing a cross-jurisdictional approach to tackling fraud.

She highlighted that, for the reporting period April 2018 to March 2020, around £935,000 of rates evasion across Northern Ireland had been detected through NFI data matching. She explained that other areas of fraud and error detected by the exercise across NI related to:

- pensions fraud, error and overpayments;
- housing benefit fraud and overpayments;
- social housing outcomes, comprising recovered properties and removal of non-eligible applicants from the social housing waiting list; and
- duplicate and erroneous payments to suppliers

She explained that the report was positive for Belfast City Council, in that this had proved to be the lowest year so far for the Council which meant that the NFI was working in that it was now preventative as opposed to a detective measure.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of NIAO confirmed that she would provide a breakdown of the Belfast City Council data to a future meeting.

The Panel noted the information which had been provided.

Corporate Risk Management

The Head of AGRS presented the Audit and Risk Panel with an analysis of how the risk profile of the Council had changed as a result of the impact of Covid-19. She also outlined the proposed actions to ensure that those risks were managed effectively.

She provided an update on compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the annual assurance statements which had been completed by the Strategic and Operational Directors, Heads of Service and Business Support Managers. She also provided the Panel with an update on business continuity management arrangements.

She reported that, in June 2020, AGRS had met with corporate risk owners to discuss how the corporate risks had been impacted and to identify any emerging risks. The analysis had indicated that:

a) all risks continued to be corporate risks;
b) the impact and likelihood of some of the corporate risks had changed and needed to be reassessed;
c) there was merit in having a standalone corporate risk on Corporate Health and Safety, given the criticality of the management of that risk in the context of the pandemic;
d) the financial position of Council had been significantly impacted by Covid-19, with resources having been re-directed to support the delivery of critical services and supporting plans for response, rebuild and recovery. This in turn had impacted upon the delivery of previously agreed plans, programmes and projects, which underpinned the delivery of the corporate plan and the management of the corporate risks.
   There were therefore challenges in reviewing, revising and agreeing Council priorities and related programmes and projects in the context of the financial position.
e) three emerging risks had been identified in relation to:

- planning for potential future lockdowns;
- organisational recovery arrangements; and
- city and community recovery arrangements

f) opportunities were seen in terms of an enhanced focus on efficiencies, increased innovation over service delivery and enhanced resilience to future incidents with increased capability for working from home.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of AGRS advised that she would submit further information relating to the Waste Management risk, in terms of recycling targets and the impact of Covid19, to a future meeting.

The Audit and Risk Panel noted how Covid-19 had impacted upon the risk profile of the Council and agreed the following:

1. that AGRS would work with management to support them in re-assessing the impact and likelihood of the corporate risks and updating their risk mitigation plans in light of Covid-19.
2. that the three emerging risks be included, whereby AGRS would work with officers to ensure that mitigation plans were developed;
3. that Health and Safety would become a standalone corporate risk;
4. the process for quarterly assurance statements during 2020/21, including the new template;
5. the creation of an overall Plan, which supported a response to potential future lockdowns / second wave of the pandemic, and for management to schedule in time to review and update their service BCM plans by the end of October 2020.

**Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services
Annual Assurance Statement**

The Head of AGRS advised that, each year she had to present an annual assurance statement. The statement was a professional opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment and formed part of the corporate governance arrangements for the Council. She reported that the annual assurance statement for 2019/2020 had been drafted, taking into account:

- the key elements of the Council's internal control arrangements, including risk management and governance arrangements;
- the results of audit work undertaken in 2019/20; and
- the work undertaken to review changes to financial governance arrangements as a result of the impact of Covid-19 and other advisory work undertaken by AGRS

She explained that the impact of Covid-19 had meant that AGRS had only completed 76% of its 2019/2020 plan against a target of 80%. A number of planned audits were unable to proceed due to officer resources and priorities being focused on the Covid-19 response, recovery and rebuilding. She advised, however, that they had instead diverted their resources to facilitating Covid-19 readiness workshops for the

critical services and tracking completion of actions arising, a review of business continuity plans and participating in silver command meetings and ensuring that there were proper processes in place to control changes to the Council's financial governance arrangements in the "new normal" working environment and providing advice on various risk and control matters.

The Panel was advised that the impact of Covid-19 on the Council had led to many significant changes which had had a knock on effect to the risk, control and governance arrangements of the Council. She explained that AGRS had been working with management to support them in managing the impact of those changes through:

- the development of a corporate process to ensure that all amendments to the usual financial controls and processes were made in a controlled manner, and were properly approved and communicated;
- facilitating a fundamental review of the corporate risks to reflect the new environment and priorities of the Council;
- participation in the organisational recovery group and silver command;
- providing advice on a variety of areas including temporary expenditure controls, service recovery, declarations of interest, working from home, use of Microsoft Teams, and the issue of PPE.

The Audit and Risk Panel reviewed and noted the Head of AGRS' annual assurance statement for 2019/20, including the progress update for the period March – June 2020.

Update on the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2019 edition) and Self-Assessment of AGRS against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

The Panel considered the undernoted report:

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Audit & Risk Panel of the self-assessment of:

- **AGRS against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)**
- **The Head of AGRS against the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit.**

1.2 We are required to declare compliance with these within the Annual Governance Statement.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Audit & Risk Panel note the self-assessment against the PSIAS and the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit.

3.0 Main report

PSIAS

3.1 The PSIAS require regular internal and external assessments to confirm that the internal audit service (AGRS) is operating to professional standards for internal auditing, thereby giving an assurance to key stakeholders that they can rely on the professionalism of the Service.

Internal Assessments

3.2 The PSIAS require 'periodic self-assessments…. to evaluate conformance with the Definition of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics and the Standards.' Our detailed self-assessment against the PSIAS is set out at appendix A, available on mod.gov. In summary, this self-assessment found that we are compliant with the PSIAS.

External Assessments

3.2 The PSIAS also stipulate that 'external assessments must be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation.' Our last external assessment was undertaken by On Board Training and Consultancy in 2017/18 which concluded that:

- **AGRS conforms to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards**
- **There are a few areas which require action but they do not significantly impact on On Board's overall opinion**
- **There was strong evidence from their review of the value and contribution that AGRS makes to the Council's governance, risk management and control environment**

3.4 Our next external review is due in 2022/23.

3.5 The CIPFA Statement, updated in April 2019, outlines the principles the Head of Internal Audit should meet to be able to operate effectively and perform their duties, in addition to the personal skills and professional standards expected of the Head of Internal Audit. The Head of AGRS has undertaken this self-assessment, which indicates compliance with the statement and the detailed self-assessment may be found at appendix B, available on mod.gov.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications
None

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
None known at this time."

The Panel noted the contents of the report.

Belfast City Council - Review of Code of Governance

The Panel considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 In line with best practice, the Council has developed a Code of Governance based on the 7 core principles set out in the new CIPFA Solace Framework.

1.2 The Code was initially reviewed and approved by the Audit Panel on 13th May 2008 and has been reviewed and updated annually thereafter (see section A of the appendix for the summary version of the Code and section B for the detailed Code). The results of the annual review and update of the Code informs the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement, which forms part of the published annual Financial Report for the Council.

1.3 This paper presents the updated Code to the Audit & Risk Panel for review and approval.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Audit & Risk Panel is asked to review and approve the attached updated Code of Governance for Belfast City Council, which has been prepared in line with the CIPFA framework (2016 edition).

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

This section of the report is laid out as follows:
3.1 - Introduction
3.2 - AGRS review of arrangements
3.3 - Ongoing improvements planned for 20/21

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Governance is about how Belfast City Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

3.1.2 Belfast City Council is committed to the core and supporting principles of good governance set out within the CIPFA Solace Framework, namely that good governance means:

- **Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law**
- **Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement**
- **Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits**
- **Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes**
- **Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it**
- **Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management**
- **Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability**

3.2 AGRS review of arrangements

3.2.1 AGRS has undertaken an annual review of the Council's Code of Governance. The main purpose of this review was to confirm that the Council has arrangements in place to address the 7 principles of good governance as set out in the Code and to ensure that the Code reflects new initiatives and changes. To undertake this review, AGRS contacted various Council officers and inspected supporting documents to determine whether the systems, processes and documents provide evidence of compliance with the 7 principles of good governance set out in the Code.

3.2.2 The main updates to the Code are Covid-19 related and include the following:

- **New process put in place for decision-making during Covid-19 pandemic - agreed by Special Council on 13th March 2020**
- **Covid-19 corporate risk assessments, implementation of Public Health Agency advice and changes to working practices**
- **Governance over Covid-19 related changes to financial processes**
- **Development of Covid-19 response, rebuild, recover plans.**

3.2.3 Our review confirmed that arrangements were in place to address the principles of the code and also identified areas where ongoing improvements are planned (see below). The AGRS review of the Code of Governance has not sought to validate the quality and application of all of these arrangements (although some elements of the framework have been subject to audit during the year).

3.3 Ongoing improvements planned for 20/21

3.3.1 A number of improvements are quite complex to implement and while work has been undertaken to progress these improvements, they remain ongoing and are likely to remain ongoing during 2020/21 given that the Councils focus is on response to and recovery from Covid-19. It is important that these actions, designed to improve our governance arrangements, are considered as part of the corporate plan impact assessment and prioritisation of programmes / projects:

a) Implementation of the recommendations from the external reviews of Procurement, Finance and Human Resources;
b) Development of Social Value Policy; Social Value Procurement Framework; guidance for officers and for suppliers;
c) Development and agreement of the governance and assurance framework for the Belfast Region City Deal;
d) Development of a plan to develop an overarching Asset Management Strategy;
e) A process to monitor and improve compliance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation is currently under development and will include reporting on the exercise of procurement (delegated) authority powers;

f) Review and update of the conflict of Interest and gifts and hospitality polices and processes for Belfast City Council officers;
g) Implementation of a corporate policy management process and system;
h) Development of a customer focus strategy and programme; and
i) A number of ICT improvements are continuing in 20/21 including updating of the ICT strategy and policies, a security strategy review and the implementation of electronic records management.

3.3.2 Equality or Good Relations Implications

Equality and good relations implications are integral to the Code of Governance."

The Panel adopted the recommendations.

Belfast City Council - Draft Annual Governance Statement 2020

The Head of AGRS presented the Panel with the Annual Governance Statement for the Council for 2019/20, for consideration and inclusion in the unaudited statement of accounts which would be certified by the Chief Financial Officer by 31st August 2020 and would then be subject to audit by the NIAO.

She explained that the Statement for the year 2019/20 had been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2019/20 accounts and was consistent with the principles of the new CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (2016 edition).

She advised the Members of the Panel that the Annual Governance Statement had been updated to reflect key changes to the Council's governance arrangements due to Covid-19, including the interim Committee decision making process, which had been delegated to the Chief Executive in March 2020, the development of Covid-19 recovery plans, Covid-19 corporate risk assessment and change management processes over any amendments to financial processes during the pandemic. The statement also outlined significant governance issues that had arisen as a result of the impact of Covid-19.

The Panel agreed the draft Annual Governance Statement for the Council for 2019/20 and the disclosure of the significant governance issues contained in the statement.

Audit Plan 2020/21 – Update

The Head of AGRS explained that the impact of Covid19 on the Council had led to many significant changes to previously agreed plans and priorities, budgets, service delivery and the risk, control and governance arrangements. As a consequence the assurance needs of the Council had significantly changed. A draft indicative Internal Audit

and Risk Management Plan for 2020/21 had therefore been developed in light of the impact of Covid-19 in order to ensure that it met the new needs and assisted the Council in meeting relevant statutory obligations in relation to financial management, systems of internal control, management of risk and good governance.

She explained the approach to revising the original plan in terms of re-evaluating the need for each previously agreed audit in light of the changed environment and the rationale for the revised approach. She reported that, in addition to specific assignments, the plan continued to make provision for continued support to the organisation in fraud prevention/detection and investigation, whistleblowing investigation, risk management, business continuity management and corporate governance.

In recognising that they needed to be responsive to any changes in AGRS requirements throughout the year, she suggested that they would discuss and agree AGRS management needs with management and Members each quarter, adjusting the indicative plan as needed.

The Head of AGRS responded to Members' queries on the plan regarding the replacement of the internal audit of Open Spaces and Street Scene with higher priority assurance work and also the nature of the assurance work that would be undertaken this year regarding waste management and climate changes. The Panel agreed the draft indicative Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan for 2020/21.

Performance Improvement – Update

The Panel considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to:

- **present to the Panel the year-end corporate Performance Assessment for 2019-20**
- **update the Panel on progress to comply with the performance improvement duty as laid in in Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 in the context of the Covid-19 emergency**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Panel is asked to:

- **Review and approve the year end Corporate Performance Assessment 2019-20.**
- **Note the update on arrangements for 2020-2021 in the context of the Covid-19 emergency including correspondence from DfC advising that councils will not be expected to publish a performance plan by 30 June 2020 for the current financial year.**

3.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main issues

3.1 Background

Part 12 of the 2014 Local Government (NI) Act and the associated guidance requires that we:

- **produce a *forward looking* Annual Improvement Plan by 30th June (i.e. Corporate Plan) to take effect from April each financial year which reflects the Council's contribution to the Community Plan (Belfast Agenda).**
- **produce a *retrospective* Performance Improvement Assessment by September 30th detailing progress against the Improvement Objectives, examples of other forms of continuous improvement and any performance indicators included within the previous year's Corporate Plan.**

Year End Corporate Performance Assessment

3.2 As required, the Performance Unit within the Finance and Resources Directorate produced a Year End Operational Update for 2019-20 which was previously circulated to Members. The majority of the activities within the plan have been delivered but given the current situation in relation to Covid-19 some of the activities due to be undertaken in Quarter 4 have understandably been adversely impacted. In some resources had to be diverted to other essential areas, and in others the practical implications of the emergency meant that activities such as events, stakeholder engagements had to be cancelled or postponed. These activities will be reviewed and considered as part of plans for 2020 -21.

3.3 The content of the Year End Operational Update has now been used to compile the year end Corporate Performance Assessment report for 2019-20, a draft of which has been included at Appendix 1 (available on mod.gov) for approval, this document is still required to be published by 30 September 2020. Following September SP&R Committee the report will be published online pending ratification by full Council.

Annual Improvement Plan 2020 -2021

3.4 As one of the key planning documents of the organisation, the Annual Improvement Plan is produced by the City and Organisational Strategy Department. The Plan for 2020-2021

was well advanced and was due to be agreed by SP&R and published by 30th June in accordance with these obligations. However, the planned commitments included in the 2020-21 plan are now being reviewed and revised in the context of Covid- 19.

3.5 Written confirmation has been received from the Department for Communities (Appendices 2 & 3 – available on mod.gov) which acknowledges the current pressures faced by councils and advises councils will not be expected to publish a performance plan by 30 June 2020 for the current financial year. The correspondence also outlines initial thinking on the arrangements that should be put in place for councils regarding performance improvement for the next few years. In the meantime the council will continue to monitor and review our approach to improvement, including the ability of services to deliver or adapt planned improvements. The Council's immediate improvement priority is recovery: helping the city economy rebuild and supporting our residents during this challenging time. As further guidance is issued from the department the Panel will be updated.

NIAO audit and assessment 2020

3.6 The NIAO audit and assessment of BCC's Improvement activity normally takes place between July and October each year. As highlighted above this timeline is likely to shift and or be revised given the recent correspondence received. The Panel will be updated once further advice is received. Our progress against last year's audit findings is included at Appendix 4, available on mod.gov.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

Audit fees will be calculated on the basis of the time spent by the NIAO on Belfast's audit and on the levels of skill and responsibility involved. For BCC it is estimated that this will cost £25,000 this year, however this will be dependent on the revised guidance issued. As far as possible we will prepare all materials in advance to keep costs as low as possible.

3.8 Equality and Good Relations Implications

None associated with this report."

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources responded to a query regarding how Members, in future, could have input to the development of new performance indicators. The Panel adopted the recommendations.

Independent Non-Executive Member of the Audit & Risk Panel

The Panel was advised that the Independent Non-Executive Member of the Audit and Risk Panel had resigned and that a new Non-Executive Member would therefore need to be recruited.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources advised that he required the Panel to nominate an elected member, from a political party not represented by the Chairperson, to sit on the recruitment panel alongside the Chairperson, himself and the Head of Human Resources.

The Panel agreed that Councillor Carson, who had previously undertaken the necessary training, would join the recruitment panel.

Annual report from Audit and Risk Panel to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, including Annual Governance Statement

The Head of AGRS provided the Panel with an update on the summary which had been provided to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21st August of the key issues which had been considered and discussed by the Panel during the 2019/2020 financial year, the assurances which had been received and the areas which required attention. She also summarised the process by which the year-end reports were to be considered by the Members of the Audit and Risk Panel.

The Panel noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	A revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Head of HR
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, HR Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	This report sets out a proposed response to a consultation exercise being carried out by the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) on a revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to • Agree the attached draft response to the Local Government Staff Commission's consultation exercise on a revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees.

3.0	**Main report**
	Background Information
3.1	The LGSC has requested feedback on amendments to a revised Code of Conduct which has been developed by a working group, comprising representatives from Councils, NIHE, the Department for Communities and the Trade Unions. The draft revised code is attached at Appendix 2. The amendments have been made to take account of best practice following a review of examples of similar Codes of Conduct in other public sector bodies and to address issues which Councils had reported in operating the current Code.
3.2	The consultation closes on 30 September 2020 and the working group will meet to consider the responses received. The final amended Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees will then be approved by the Commission before being issued as a statutory recommendation to Councils for implementation.
	Key Issues
3.3	Corporate HR, Legal Services, AGRS, Marketing and Corporate Communications and Digital Services have input into the proposed response attached at Appendix 1.
3.4	As well as suggestions for subject matter to be included, clarification on terminology and language used, the draft response also highlights the following: • the need for the Code to explicitly state that Councils need to ensure that supporting guidance and policies for managing conflicts of interest and gifts and hospitality are up to date, clearly communicated and well understood and that they are vitally important in underpinning the Code. • that Belfast City Council agrees that the final amended Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees be approved by the Commission before being issued as a statutory recommendation to Councils for implementation. However, it should remain the case that individual councils are free to decide upon specific arrangements for the implementation of the code within their respective organisations. • that it would be helpful to have clarity on the future status of the model Code as a “statutory recommendation, when the Commission is dissolved.

3.5	The working group has also sought feedback on whether the Code of Conduct should contain guidance on council employees participating in political activity depending on their role in the council.
3.6	The code accepts at the outset that staff are entitled to hold political opinions. However, it would be extremely difficult to define a set of circumstances/ or roles within which an employee could or could not participate in political activity. If specific employees were prohibited from engaging in any political activity or opinion then this could be subject to challenge. It is our view that paragraph 4.3 in the Code is wide enough to allow for some discretion and consideration on a case by case basis.
3.7	In our response we also suggest that that the Code should require that employees must declare this planned activity and seek permission before proceeding.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.8	While there are no resource implications to this report, a revised Code of Conduct will require a robust communication exercise.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.9	Section 4.8 in the draft Code sets out the duties of both the Council and employees with regards to Equality and Good Relations.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Draft consultation response to the revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees – subject to full Council approval. Appendix 2 - Draft revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees

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Appendix 1

Code of Conduct
for Local Government Employees

Consultation Questionnaire

February 2020

Background

This paper seeks feedback on the amendments to the revised Code of Conduct, which was developed by a Working Group comprising representatives from the Councils, NIHE, the Department for Communities and the Trade Unions.

The amendments to the Code have been made:

- to take account of best practice
- following a review of examples of similar Codes of Conduct in other public sector bodies
- to address issues which Councils had reported in operating the current Code.

When the consultation closes, the Working Group will meet to consider the responses received. The final amended Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees will then be approved by the Commission before being issued in September 2020 as a statutory recommendation to Councils for implementation by 1st October 2020.

General

Do you have any comments on the Code of Conduct in general?

There are two issues that could be emphasised more in the Code.

1. The code of conduct is clear in the requirement for employees to declare interests at the earliest opportunity. However, it would be helpful if the Code emphasised that it is for the Council to decide whether a potential conflict of interest exists, and to take appropriate action – historically the tendency has been for employees to simply make a declaration (normally when an issue has been brought to their attention). In general, a form is completed and that is the extent of the action taken, for the most part.
2. The Code should explicitly state that Council's need to ensure that supporting guidance and policies for managing conflicts of interest and gifts and hospitality

are up to date, clearly communicated and well understood and that they are vitally important in underpinning the Code.

The links provide a practical, more modern and user-friendly approach, however might there be an issue with "future-proofing" a hyperlink to the NIAO guidance?

Section 1 - 3 Introduction, Status and Framework of the Code

Do you have any comments on the Introduction, Status and Framework of the Code?

Should the National Agreement for Craft Workers also be referenced?

Belfast City Council agrees that the final amended Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees be approved by the Commission before being issued as a statutory recommendation to Councils for implementation. However, it should remain the case that individual councils are free to decide upon specific arrangements for the implementation of the code within their respective organisations.

It is our understanding that the LGSC NI has developed a Management and Dissolution Plan to facilitate the continuation of the Commission's work, in anticipation of the necessary Dissolution Order which will wind up the Commission. It would be helpful to have clarity on the impact of this plan upon the current and future status of the model Code as a "statutory recommendation."

4.1 Standards of Behaviour, Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest

Do you have any comments?

4.1 (Page 8) - Code states 'Employees will be expected, without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service'

It would be clearer if this also included a reference to illegal or unethical conduct rather than simply a deficiency in service provision.

Page 8 - Code refers to organisations Social Media Policies which is helpful – should it also refer specifically to Computer Use Policies as well?

Page 9 – 'Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way'.
There is reference to personal gain but no indication / statement that this could be a potentially criminal / fraudulent act.

Page 8

"Employees must complete the Register of Interests in line with the Council policy on Conflict of Interests and must declare any new interests to the Designated Manager as soon as they become aware of them. They also have a responsibility to advise their new line manager if they change their role/position in the Council. For further information, employees should also refer to the NIAO 'Conflicts of Interest: A Good Practice Guide'."

Belfast City Council currently asks senior managers to complete and keep up to date an annual declaration of interests and that remaining employees declare any interests on an ad hoc basis in line with the Council policy on Conflict of Interests. Does the above paragraph introduce a requirement for all staff to complete a register of interests (even if they do not have any)? Could this sentence be changed to: "Employees must adhere to the requirements regarding declaration of interests which are set out in the Council policy on Conflict of Interests"?

It might be worth defining the different types of conflicts of interest, for example:

- An **actual** conflict of interest involves a conflict between a public official's duties and responsibilities in serving the public interest and the public official's private interests.

- A **perceived** conflict of interest is where it appears that a public official's private interests could improperly influence the performance of their duties – whether or not this is in fact the case.

- A **potential** conflict of interest is where a public official has private interests that could conflict with their official duties in the future.

The NIAO Conflict of Interest A Good Practice Guide defines actual, perceived and potential referring to this document: Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Sector toolkit, Independent Commission Against Corruption and Crime and Misconduct Commission (Queensland), Sydney and Brisbane, 2004

4.2 Disclosure of Information

Do you have any comments?

Page 9

Paragraph 3: In addition to the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 give a right of access to information (environmental) held. Therefore, consider adding the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 to the list of legislation in Appendix 1, paragraph 4.

Paragraph 3: Although the requirement to have a publication scheme is set out in the FOI Act, the right of access by an applicant making a request for information is a separate mechanism provided in the Act.

Paragraph 5: personal data and special category personal data are defined in the GDPR and DPA 2018 and must be processed in accordance with this legislation, which allows for disclosure of same in certain circumstances.

4.3 Political Neutrality

Do you have any comments?

Page 10
Paragraph 4:
"An employee of a council cannot stand or be elected as a councillor (Local Government Act (NI) 1972, Section 4)."

Our understanding is that an employee may stand and be elected as a councillor in a council different to that they are employed by(provided they do not hold one of the prescribed offices or employments outlined in the Local Government (Disqualification) (Prescribed Offices and Employments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

We recommend that the text is changed to reflect the provisions of the 2014 regulations.

Paragraph 5:
Specifying that conflicts of interest can arise when participating in other political activity would be useful – for example, canvassing; distributing literature. It is suggested that the Code should require that employees must declare this planned activity and seek permission before proceeding.

4.4 Potential Conflict of Interest Situations

Do you have any comments?

In terms of layout, it might be useful to have a dedicated section on Conflicts of Interest with relevant sub-sections for clarity.

Is there a need to highlight here that conflicts of interests can be indirect i.e. relate to spouse / family member etc. to align with the mention in the model declaration?

Should there be some explanation of the need to declare pecuniary interests as per Section 46 of Local Government Act (NI) 1972?

Page 11
Paragraph 2: "…they should not approach or attempt to influence councillors in relation to personal or contractual matters, for example, a potential regrading of their post."

Suggest changing it to: "should not attempt to influence councillors in relation to a personal employment matter", as it conflicts with what is set out in paragraph 5:

"This does not compromise an employee's rights as a ratepayer to access and/or question the provision of Council services to them through open and transparent Council procedures, for example, in relation to a planning or refuse collection issue".

Paragraph 3: *"Employees should not report any issues or concerns regarding the operation of the council to a councillor. These should be raised with their line manager, or by following the whistleblowing procedures, if appropriate."*

It is suggested that this should be reworded to:
"Employees should not report any issues or concerns regarding the operation of the council to a councillor which have come to their attention in the course of carrying out their duties. These should be raised with their line manager, or by following the whistleblowing procedures, if appropriate."

To alleviate any concerns that an officer's entitlement as a ratepayer to access their own elected representative is compromised, it is suggested that Paragraph 5 should follow immediately.

Although the Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol is not within the scope of this review, it is the position of BCC that this protocol would benefit from further review, as it has now been in place for five years.

Page 12
Paragraph 1: suggested rewording:
"This may require reasonable adjustments for effective communication with people with disabilities in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. In addition, the language needs of someone whose first language is not English need to be considered."

Page 12
Paragraph 2

"Employees also have a right not to be verbally or physically abused by the community and service users. Any incidents should be reported immediately to the employee's line manager."

While the intention of this provision is understood and welcomed, it appears to be outside the scope of the Code of Conduct which deals with standards of behaviour for employees.

4.5 Appointments and other Employment Matters

Do you have any comments?

Page 14 and Appendix 1

The wording referring to the LGSC Code of Procedures on R&S is still the same but the definition of "family relationships" is now updated to include co-habiting partners, adopted relatives, step relatives etc., which is better, more modern.

However, often it's the definition of "personal relationship" that causes the problems though. While the wording on "personal relationships" has been updated to specifically include sexual/romantic relationships and business/commercial/financial relationships - which is better - it still just refers to friendships. Might it be useful to incorporate a definition of friendship?

NB The BCC Conflict of Interest Policy defines "friend" as follows:
"someone with whom the employee has a very close and regular social alliance over and above what would be considered as a friendly, working relationship."

4.6 Outside Commitments

Do you have any comments?

Does this section cover the scenario where employees start their own business – if so, should that be made clearer?

This section indicates that a person **is not** required to seek approval from the council to have a second job.

Appendix 1, page 20 goes on to include a section of the Civil Service Handbook relating to additional employment which says it has been adapted for local government. The adopted paragraph includes the following line "if an employee wishes to undertake any work (paid or unpaid) with another employer they must first obtain permission from their line manager/the Council"

We would seek clarification whether the first statement is in error and permission **is** required to have a second job or business interest or if permission **is not** required unless it relates to one of the activities listed, then the statement in Appendix 1 as adopted from the civil service would require rewording.

This section could be clarified to distinguish between actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest and that any staff declaration register should capture this.

It should be clarified that where any external business, appointment or employment is considered to be an actual conflict with the interests of the council (as set out in the three bullet points), then it should not proceed whilst the individual is the subject of an employment contract with the council.

It is the view of BCC that employees should be required to declare any second employment – not only for the purposes of the Code of Conduct, but for assurance on other compliance matters in respect of the Working Time Directive.

4.7 Personal Interests

Do you have any comments?

4.8 Equality Issues

Do you have any comments?

4.9 Separation of Roles During Procurement

Do you have any comments?

4.10 Fraud and Corruption

Do you have any comments?

Page 16.
Paragraph 4.10 would potentially benefit from making specific reference to the Fraud Act 2006 and 3 main provisions therein i.e.

- ***By false representation***: It is an offence to commit fraud by dishonestly making a false representation to make a gain for yourself or another, or to cause loss to another, or to expose them to a risk of loss.
- ***By failing to disclose information:*** It is an offence to commit fraud by failing to disclose information to another person where there is a legal duty to disclose information.
- ***By abuse of position:*** examples of abuse of position may include, for example, an employee who gives contracts or discounts to friends and family.

This would help distinguish between Fraud and Bribery (which is referred to in slightly more detail).

Reference is made to expenses, travelling and mileage expenses – the inclusion of overtime should also be considered.

4.11 Use of Financial and other Council Resources

Do you have any comments?

Page 17

4.11 states: ‘An employee who, in their role in the Council, is responsible for a significant budget and becomes insolvent or bankrupt, must inform their line manager promptly’. The following clarification is suggested “An officer who is **employed in a role that involves dealing with financial matters or in a regulated profession (e.g. law, accountancy, financial services), and who becomes insolvent or bankrupt, must inform their line manager promptly.”**

4.12 Hospitality and Gifts

Do you have any comments?

Page 17
We welcome the clarity provided by the addition of these sentences.

- “If an employee is in any doubt about the propriety of accepting any hospitality, he/she should take advice from their line manager.”
- “Offers of hospitality which are declined should also be recorded in the Gifts and Hospitality register.”
- “any offers of hospitality are reported and agreed by the employee’s line manager in advance,”

4.12 – states ‘Employees should not accept personal gifts from contractors, members of the public and outside suppliers….’ – might be helpful if this also included organisations or groups in receipt of funding from the council.

4.13 Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving

Do you have any comments?

4.14 Whistleblowing

Do you have any comments?

Page 18
4.14 – states ‘If an employee becomes aware of activities which he/she believes to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this Code, the employee should report the matter, acting in accordance with the employee's rights under The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998…’

This paragraph could also include the term dangerous (which might include serious H&S matters).

It also reads slightly at odds with paragraph 2 section 4.1 (pg8) which signposts the reader to whistleblowing in relation to a 'deficiency in service provision' – see comments above on this point.

4.14 Paragraph 2

"Any employee raising such concerns need have no fear of recrimination. He/she will be properly supported and his/her identity will not be revealed."

This language "over-commits" in terms of what can be guaranteed by Councils. Local Whistle-blowing policies are unlikely to give absolute guarantees of anonymity of a whistle-blower. These are matters that will have to be managed on a case-by-case basis at local level.

4.15 Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Do you have any comments?

Is it worth highlighting that failure to comply with the code, in addition to disciplinary action, could also lead to loss of employment and "*referral of the matter to the PSNI"* which could lead to criminal prosecution?

Appendix 1 Legal and Other Provisions

Do you have any comments?

See above for Section 4.6

Section 1 and 4
These should refer to the General Data Protection Regulation 2016. (It was made in 2016 and came into force in 2018.)

Section 2
See also comment at 4.5,

We note that the term 'dependents' has been removed and we would seek clarification that dependents are included within the meaning of the following language:
"For the avoidance of doubt, a personal relationship for the purposes of the Code of Conduct includes: a family relationship other than that specified above;"

The extract from the NI Civil Service conflict of interest guidelines states that "If an employee wishes to undertake any work (paid or unpaid) with another employer they must first obtain permission from their line manager/the Council." This is not aligned to process outlined in 4.6 Outside Commitments?
See also comments at section 4.6

Paragraph 4

In light of comments re Section 4.2 above, you may also wish to add the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 to the list of legislation.

Appendix 2 Guidance on Participating in Political Activity

The working group are seeking views on whether the Code of Conduct should contain guidance on council employees participating in political activity depending on their role in the council, for example canvassing for a political party, expressing views on political matters in letters to a newspaper, or in books, articles or leaflets.

Do you have any views?

This might need more detailed consideration and it may be more useful to leave it silent so each case can be decided on its own merits and allow a degree of common sense. The code accepts at the outset that staff are entitled to hold political opinions and there is already provision within the social media guidelines in terms of posting opinions which may be in conflict with the role of the employee and the Council. It would be extremely difficult to define a set of circumstances or roles within which an employee could or could not participate in political activity. If specific employees were prohibited from engaging in any political activity or opinion then this could be subject to challenge. Paragraph 4.3 is wide enough to allow for some discretion and a case by case basis. Please see comments at 4.3 above.

Appendix 3 Model Declaration of Interest Form

Do you have any comments?

The addition of direct and indirect interests in welcomed. It might be helpful to include a section to highlight if the declaration details would reveal any special category data (under the Data Protection Act 2018) so that this is clear (as it requires higher level of protection and might be exempt from disclosure). Should there be an explicit section or subsection to highlight any pecuniary interest as per Section 46 of Local Government Act (NI) 1972. The template should indicate whether the declaration of interest is potential, actual or perceived. See comments at 4.6. This form would also need the organisation to add their own privacy notice as it is collecting and processing personal data. It is unclear why membership of a professional body should be declared – this requirement is likely to impact on a significant number of employees unnecessarily.

Should there be a requirement on Councils to ensure every employee considers conflicts of interest and completes a regular declaration of interest template? Currently in BCC only senior managers are required to complete an annual declaration but it is accepted that all employees could potentially find themselves in a conflict of interest situation.

Please return this questionnaire to lorna.parsons@lgsc.org.uk by Friday 22nd May 2020.

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CODE OF CONDUCT
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

September 2020

Draft

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

CONTENTS

		Page No.
1.0	**INTRODUCTION**	**4**
1.1	Status of the Code	4
2.0	**FRAMEWORK FOR THE CODE**	**5**
2.1	National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service	5
2.2	Principles of Conduct	5
3.0	**CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**	**7**
4.0	**MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES**	**8**
4.1	Standards of Behaviour, Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest	8
4.2	Disclosure of Information	9
4.3	Political Neutrality	10
4.4	Potential Conflict of Interest Situations	10
4.5	Appointments and Other Employment Matters	13
4.6	Outside Commitments	14
4.7	Personal Interests	14
4.8	Equality Issues	15
4.9	Separation of Roles During Procurement	16
4.10	Fraud and Corruption	16
4.11	Use of Financial and other Council Resources	17
4.12	Hospitality and Gifts	17
4.13	Sponsorship - Giving and Receiving	18
4.14	Whistleblowing	18
4.15	Breaches of the Code of Conduct	18

Draft

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 **19**

Legal and other Provisions Relating to the Code of Conduct 19

Key Terms used in the Code of Conduct 22

Appendix 2 **23**

Guidance on Participating in Political Activity 23

Appendix 3 **24**

Model Declaration of Interest Form 24

Appendix 4 **26**

DOE – LGPD1 Cover Letter re. Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol 26

Local Government Employee & Councillor Working Relationship Protocol (Issued October 2014) 27

Draft

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Status of the Code

Under Article 35(1)(b) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1992, the functions of the Local Government Staff Commission include:

"*establishing and issuing a code of recommended practice as regards conduct of officers of councils*".

This Code has been drafted by a working group comprising officers from local government, the Department for Communities, the Local Government Staff Commission and the Trade Unions. It has been agreed by the Local Government Staff Commission and is promulgated under the authority of the Local Government Staff Commission under Section 40(4) (f) of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.

It is therefore issued by the Local Government Staff Commission as a statutory recommendation for adoption by all councils and the Staff Commission from 1 October 2020.

It is desirable for the protection of the public and the protection of employees that guidance be given to local government employees as to the conduct expected of them. This Code provides guidance to assist councils and their employees in their day-to-day work and sets out the minimum standards of behaviour expected.

The aim of the Code is to set guidelines for council employees which will help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from criticism or misunderstanding.

2.0 FRAMEWORK FOR THE CODE

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees who work for district councils and this Code has been developed in line with best practice, existing legislation and the following guidance.

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The provisions of this Code apply to all staff employed by councils in Northern Ireland and the Local Government Staff Commission for NI in the performance of their duties on a day-to-day basis including any additional offices to which they may be appointed in their capacity as a district council employee (see Appendix 1, page 22 for a definition of employee/member of staff).

2.1 National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (the National Agreement)

The basic principle is stated in Part 2 paragraph 2, Key National Provisions of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services, National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (the National Agreement):

2. Official Conduct

2.1 Employees will maintain conduct of the highest standard such that public confidence in their integrity is sustained.

2.2 Local codes of practice will be developed to cover the official conduct and the obligations of employees and employers.

Similar provisions are incorporated in the National Conditions of Service of Chief Executive and Chief Officers.

2.2 Principles of Conduct

This Code builds on, and is in keeping with, the seven principles of public life articulated by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (established in October 1994) and the five further principles of conduct that have been adopted by the Northern Ireland Assembly, both emphasise that those in public life should practice:

- **Public Duty** - uphold the law and to act on all occasions in accordance with the public trust placed in them and act in the interests of the community as a whole.

- **Selflessness** - act in the public interest at all times and take decisions based solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families, or their friends.

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- **Integrity** - not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

- **Objectivity** - in carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

- **Accountability** - are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

- **Openness** - be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.

- **Honestly** - act honestly. Have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

- **Leadership** - promote and support these principles by leadership and example in order to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of the public, to ensure the integrity of their council in conducting business.

- **Equality** - promote equality of opportunity and not discriminate against any person by treating people with respect regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether or not a person has dependants.

- **Promoting Good Relations** - act in a way that is conducive to promoting good relations by providing a positive example for the wider community to follow and that seeks to promote a culture of respect, equality and embrace diversity in all its forms.

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- **Respect** - Employees and Councillors are reminded that it is acknowledged that the exchange of ideas and opinions on policies may be robust but this should be kept in context and not extended to individuals being subjected to unreasonable and excessive personal attack. They should keep in mind that rude and offensive behaviour may lower the public's regard for, and confidence in, Councillors and councils, they should therefore show respect and considerations for others at all times.

- **Good Working Relationships** - Councillors and Employees are servants of the public and are interdependent upon one another. But their responsibilities are distinct. The working relationship between Councillors and Employees must at all times be professional, courteous and based on mutual respect and trust. Neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position. All Councillors and Employees are responsible for ensuring they understand what behaviour is required of them, complying with respective Codes of Conduct. Both share a responsibility for understanding sensitivities and feelings of others and avoiding behaviour that could cause offence or distress.

3.0 CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This Code was drafted and agreed by a working group comprising officers from local government, the Department for Communities, the Local Government Staff Commission and the Trade Unions.

The Code was issued for consultation in February 2020. The Code will be finally revised and issued for implementation with effect from 1 October 2020.

Draft

4.0 MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

4.1 Standards of Behaviour, Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest

Council employees (see Appendix 1, page 22 for a definition of employee/member of staff) are expected to conduct themselves with integrity and honesty in carrying out their duties and must provide the highest possible standard of service to the public. Where it is part of their duties to provide appropriate advice to councillors and fellow employees this must always be done with impartiality.

Employees will be expected, without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service (see paragraph 4.14, page 18 - *Whistleblowing* which provides more detail about an employee's responsibilities in this regard).

Responsibility is placed on every member of staff to disclose to an appropriate manager or officer of the council every potential conflict of interest in which he/she may be involved. Employees must complete the Register of Interests in line with the Council policy on Conflict of Interests and must declare any new interests to the Designated Manager as soon as they become aware of them. They also have a responsibility to advise their new line manager if they change their role/position in the Council. For further information, employees should also refer to the NIAO 'Conflicts of Interest: A Good Practice Guide'.

In general employees' private interests must not have the potential for allegations of impropriety or partiality which might bring the Council into disrepute. This includes standards of behaviour outside the working environment where the employee is known to be an employee of the Council. This also extends to the use of social media outside of work, for example, some councils do not allow their employees to state that they work for the council on their personal facebook profile. Further information can be found in the Council's Social Media Policy (insert hyperlink).

Employees should not use their official position, or information acquired in their official duties, to further their private interest or those of others.

Employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of the terms of this Code.

Draft

4.2 Disclosure of Information

The law requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government departments, service users and the public (see Appendix 1, page 19 for examples). The Council itself may also decide to be open about other types of information.

The Council should therefore make clear to employees:

- the types of information which must be made available, and to whom;
- the types of information which the Council has voluntarily made open, and to whom;
- the types of information which the Council does not wish to be disclosed without specific permission.

The law also requires that personal information held about individuals must be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Employees must ensure that they process data lawfully in accordance with the data protection principles. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 also gives a right of access to information held by public authorities in accordance with the provisions of the authority's publication scheme.

Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

Any particular information received by an employee from an individual, (including a councillor) which is personal to the individual should be kept confidential, except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by law, for example, where an individual shares information which may be a safeguarding issue, this must be shared with the Council Safeguarding Officer and passed on to the relevant agency, or where the individual provides their permission to disclose the information.

Draft

4.3 Political Neutrality

Employees serve the Council as a whole. They must serve all councillors equally, and not just those of a particular group, for example the majority/main party, and must ensure that the individual rights of all councillors are respected.

Some employees may be required to advise political groups. In providing this advice, employees should not compromise their political neutrality. Any advice given should be available to all political groups, if requested.

All employees must not let their own personal or political opinions interfere with their work. While the Council recognises and respects the rights of all employees to hold personal or political opinions; employees should ensure that the expression of those opinions does not constitute a conflict of interest for their role within the Council. This does not compromise an officer's rights in relation to collective trade union representation and engagement, and lawful trade union activity.

An employee of a council cannot stand or be elected as a councillor (Local Government Act (NI) 1972, Section 4.

Appendix 2 (page 23) outlines guidance on participating in political activity for council officers.

4.4 Potential Conflict of Interest Situations

As specified in paragraph 4.1, page 8 - *Standards of Behaviour, Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest*, staff are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, impartiality and honesty and their private interests should not have the potential for allegations of impropriety or partiality to be sustained thereby bringing the Council into disrepute.

Appendix 3 on page 24 sets out a model Declaration of Interest Form, extracted from the NI Audit Office Guidance.

In particular, attention is drawn to the following examples of situations where potential conflicts of interest can occur:

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Relationships with Councillors

Employees are responsible to the Council through its senior managers and in many cases in carrying out their duties they also give advice to councillors. Mutual respect between employees and councillors is essential to good local government. Close personal familiarity between employees and individual councillors can damage this relationship and prove embarrassing to other employees and councillors and should therefore be avoided (see paragraph 4.1, page 8 - *Standards of Behaviour, Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest*, in relation to disclosing every potential conflict of interest).

Employees should deal with councillors in a polite, professional and efficient manner. They should not approach or attempt to influence councillors in relation to personal or contractual matters, for example, a potential regrading of their post.

Employees should not report any issues or concerns regarding the operation of the council to a councillor. These should be raised with their line manager, or by following the whistleblowing procedures, if appropriate.

Employees should report to an appropriate manager if a councillor attempts to pressurise them to deal with a matter which is not in accordance with Council procedure or policy.

This does not compromise an employee's rights as a ratepayer to access and/or question the provision of Council services to them through open and transparent Council procedures, for example, in relation to a planning or refuse collection issue

Employees who have concerns about whether there is a potential conflict of interest should raise the matter with an appropriate manager.

For further advice and guidance, refer to the Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol attached at Appendix 4, page 27.

Contact with the Community and Service Users

The community and service users have a right to expect a high standard of professional service from the Council. Employees have a responsibility to the community they serve and should, ensure courteous, effective and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community.

Draft

Employees should always try to be positive, constructive and inclusive. This may require reasonable adjustments to be made for example, for someone whose first language is not English or who has a disability.

Employees also have a right not to be verbally or physically abused by the community and service users. Any incidents should be reported immediately to the employee's line manager.

Relationships with Contractors, Planning Applicants and those applying for Council Grant

All relationships with external contractors or potential contractors or applicants for planning consent or grant must be made known to the appropriate manager. Similarly, any beneficial interest or licence in respect of land which is affected by a planning application must be made known to the appropriate manager.

Employees who are employed within the Planning Department must also adhere to the Planning Code of Conduct – (insert hyperlink)

Orders and contracts, grants and planning decisions must be decided on merit and no special favour should be shown in the procurement process to any businesses or potential suppliers particularly those run by, for example, friends, persons to whom the employee owes (or is owed) an obligation, partners or persons where a family relationship is deemed to exist (see Appendix 1, page 19 for a definition of family relationship).

Employees who deal with, engage or supervise contractors or process or determine applications under delegated powers with whom they have previously had, or currently have, a relationship in a private or domestic capacity, should declare that relationship to the appropriate manager as soon as they are aware.

Employees must not accept money or any other reward from any organisation, body or individual who may benefit from work or funding provided by the council. To do so would, in law, be corrupt.

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Bribery & Corruption

Under the Bribery Act 2010 it is a serious criminal offence to

- Offer, promise or give someone a reward to induce them to perform their functions or activities improperly.

- Accept, agree to accept or request a reward in return for performing a relevant function or activity improperly.

- Bribe a foreign public official in order to win business, keep business or gain business advantage for the organisation.

4.5 Appointments and Other Employment Matters

Employees involved in appointments should at all times act in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection (Code of Procedures).

The Code of Procedures at Part D, Stage 2 – Conflict of Interest, page D:52 states:

"Responsibility is placed on every panel member to disclose to an appropriate manager or officer of the council where potential conflict of interest may be present, for example partners or persons where a family relationship is deemed to exist, or if an individual has agreed to act as a referee for an applicant"

and

"Where a potential conflict of interest exists, the issue is not about satisfying the conscience of the individual. Public perceptions and also those of other candidates must be considered and, in such cases, it may be appropriate for the individual to withdraw from the recruitment exercise."

Draft

Similarly, employees should not be involved in decisions in relation to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee with whom they have a close personal relationship, a person to whom the employee owes (or is owed) an obligation, partner or person where a family relationship is deemed to exist (see Appendix 1, page 19 for a definition of family relationship). For further examples of Potential Categories of Interests see Appendix 1, page 20.

4.6 Outside Commitments

Employees must not have any external business, external employment or external appointment without advising their line manager. Employees should declare through the Staff Declaration Register if any of the following apply to the business, employment or appointment, and engagement in it would, in the Council's view:

- not be in the Council's interests
- put the employee in a position where duty to the Council and external interests would conflict, or are likely to conflict
- weaken public confidence in the impartiality of the Council or in the effective conduct of the Council's work.

Engagement in any external business, employment or appointment will be deemed to act detrimentally to the Council's interests where it may give rise to or contribute to an employee's sickness absence, or deterioration in performance.

Employees should follow the Council's rules on the ownership of intellectual property or copyright created during their employment.

Employers and employees of councils should be aware of their responsibilities under the European Working Time Directive.

4.7 Personal Interests

Employees should review regularly their personal circumstances and take steps to deal with any potential conflict of interest (refer to paragraph 4.1, page 8). As soon as they become aware of a potential conflict, employees must declare to an appropriate manager any financial or non-financial interests that they consider could bring about conflict with the Council's interests, for instance:

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- membership of an organisation receiving grant aid from the council.

- membership of an organisation or pressure group which may seek to influence the Council's policies.

- membership of an organisation which may seek to influence the performance of an employee in carrying out their duties.

- having a beneficial interest in land which is within the Council's district and is subject to any planning application.

- having a beneficial interest in a company which is seeking to, or doing business with the council

Employees who have an interest, financial or non-financial, should not involve themselves in any decision or allocation of Council services or resources from which they, their friends, persons to whom they owe (or are owed) an obligation, or family might benefit and should ensure that the matter is referred immediately to their line manager.

The Council recognises and respects the right of all employees to become members of organisations. However, employees must declare personal interests where there is, or could be perceived to be, a conflict of interest between their duties as an employee and their membership of the organisation.

4.8 Equality Issues

All members of the community, customers and employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity.

In this regard employees must:

- be made aware of their obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, other relevant equality law and the Human Rights Act 1998 (see Appendix 1, paragraph 4, page 21);

- co-operate with the Council in the application of any policies agreed by the Council relating to equality issues;

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- not take discriminatory action or decisions or encourage or put pressure on fellow employees to take discriminatory action or decisions;

- report any concerns about discriminatory conduct to their line manager or other appropriate employee.

4.9 Separation of Roles During Procurement

Employees involved in the procurement process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the Council. All employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.

Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors. Employees who are privy to confidential information relating to the tendering process should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

Employees contemplating a management buyout should, as soon as they have formed a definite intent, inform the appropriate manager and withdraw from the contract awarding process.

Employees should ensure that, in awarding contracts, no special favour is shown to current or former employees or someone with whom they have a close personal relationship, partners or persons where a family relationship is deemed to exist (see Appendix 1, page 19 for a definition of family relationship) or to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

4.10 Fraud and Corruption

Employees must be aware that, under the Bribery Act 2010, it is a serious criminal offence for them to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in his/her official capacity (see paragraph 4.12, page 17 for guidance on *Hospitality and Gifts*).

Employees must adhere to the highest principles of integrity and must comply with all relevant policies in relation to expenses, travelling and mileage allowances.

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Employees should also refer to the Council's Fraud policy (insert hyperlink).

4.11 Use of Financial and other Council Resources

Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the Council.

An employee who, in their role in the Council, is responsible for a significant budget and becomes insolvent or bankrupt, must inform their line manager promptly.

4.12 Hospitality and Gifts

Employees should only accept offers of hospitality or invitations to attend social or sporting functions where the Council should be seen to be represented. They must be properly authorised and recorded in accordance with the Council's policy.

If an employee is in any doubt about the propriety of accepting any hospitality, he/she should take advice from their line manager.

When hospitality has to be declined, those making the offer should be courteously advised of the procedures and standards operating within the authority. Offers of hospitality which are declined should also be recorded in the Gifts and Hospitality register.

Employees should not accept personal gifts from contractors, members of the public and outside suppliers, although the Council may wish to allow employees to keep items of token value such as pens, diaries etc in line with the Council policy on Gifts and Hospitality (insert hyperlink).

When considering whether or not to accept authorised hospitality, employees should be particularly sensitive as to its timing in relation to decisions which the Council may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality, for instance during a tendering period of a contract for which the provider may be bidding.

Acceptance by employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where:

- it is clear that the hospitality is corporate rather than personal;

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- any offers of hospitality are reported and agreed by the employee's line manager in advance, or
- where the Council is satisfied that any procurement decisions are not compromised.

Where a visit is necessary, to inspect equipment for example, the Council should consider meeting the cost of the visit to avoid jeopardising the integrity of the Council in subsequent procurement decisions.

4.13 Sponsorship - Giving and Receiving

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a Council activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service neither an employee nor any friends, partners or persons where a family relationship is deemed to exist (see Appendix 1, page 19 for a definition of family relationship) must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to an appropriate manager of any such interest.

Similarly, where the Council through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

4.14 Whistleblowing

If an employee becomes aware of activities which he/she believes to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this Code, the employee should report the matter, acting in accordance with the employee's rights under The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, in line with the Council's Whistleblowing Policy (insert hyperlink).

Any employee raising such concerns need have no fear of recrimination. He/she will be properly supported and his/her identify will not be revealed.

4.15 Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Any breach by an employee of any part of the Code of Conduct or its supporting policies and guidance may be a disciplinary matter.

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Appendix 1

LEGAL AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Disclosure of Information (paragraph 4.2, page 9)

Data Protection Act 2018
Freedom of Information Act 2000.
Part 8, sections 42-52 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 deals with Access to meetings and Documents.
Obligations of Discovery in connection with litigation.
Human Rights Act 1998
General Data Protection Regulation 2018

2. Potential Conflict of Interest Situations (paragraph 4.4, page 10)

Persons who owe you an obligation, or to whom you owe an obligation – this might include a debtor, creditor, fellow member of an organisation.

Very close personal relationships may also create a conflict, e.g. a good friend.

<u>Family Relationship</u>

For the purposes of the Code of Conduct, a relevant family relationship shall be deemed to exist between an officer and another person if they are:

- Married
- Civil Partners
- Cohabiting as if they were married
- Cohabiting as if they were civil partners (partners)

or the other person is a biological, adopted, foster or step relative to an officer or of that officer's married partner, civil partner, or partner under one of the following categories:

- Child
- Parent
- Sibling
- Son in law or Daughter in law
- Mother in law or Father in law

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- Sister in law or Brother in law
- Uncle or Aunt
- Nephew or Niece
- Grandson or Granddaughter
- Grandparent

For the avoidance of doubt, a personal relationship for the purposes of the Code of Conduct includes:

- a family relationship other than that specified above
- a business/commercial/financial relationship
- a sexual/romantic relationship
- a friendship

Potential Categories of Interest relating to Additional Employment

The following guidelines have been adapted from the NI Civil Service conflict of interest guidelines relating to additional employment

The following extract[1] deals with mitigating the conflict of 'being an employee, director, partner of another business or organisation, or pursuing a business opportunity':

"If an employee wishes to undertake any work (paid or unpaid) with another employer they must first obtain permission from their line manager/the Council.

No remunerative private work of the following description may be undertaken:

a. *work which would occupy your time or attention or render you unavailable for duty during normal official hours;*

b. *work identified in any way with the activities of a political party, group or organisation;*

c. *work of an educational, literary or scientific nature involving the use of information acquired by you in your official capacity or from official sources, except where it has previously been published, unless you have received the permission of your employing department to undertake such work;*

[1] NICS Staff Handbook, Section 6.01, paragraph 6.1 and 6.2

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d. work of a nature conflicting with your duty to the Council

e. work which may ultimately have to be reviewed by you or any member of the Council acting in an official capacity;

f. work, related to your function, which an employee of the Council might otherwise justifiably undertake, but which is of such a scale as to involve unfair competition with persons wholly dependent on such work for a livelihood;

g. work which would involve the use of the property, tools, equipment or materials of the Council; and

h. work which is, or might be, inconsistent with your position as a public servant and may expose you or the Council to public criticism."

3. Appointments and Other Employment Matters (paragraph 4.5, page 13)

Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection

Part B - General Principles Underpinning the Code (on page 4) recommends actions to ensure that appointments are made under the merit principle.

Section 41 of Local Government Act (NI) 1972 deals with appointments to councils

4. Equality Issues (paragraph 4.8, page 15)

Legislation

- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003
- The Employment Equality Age Regulations (NI) 2006
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976
- Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997
- Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978 and Exceptions Order 1979
- Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970
- Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000
- Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002

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- Parental Rights and Flexible Working under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996
- Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018

5. Fraud and Corruption (paragraph 4.10, page 16)

Section 46 of Local Government Act (NI) 1972 deals with the declaration of interest where an employee has a pecuniary interest and with recording of such interests. Not to do so will be an offence.

Section 47 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 forbids employees to accept payment apart from their salary/wage.

KEY TERMS USED IN THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Employee/s or Member/s of Staff

The terms employee/s or member/s of staff should be taken to mean any individual/s employed by a council including those working both full time and part time on a permanent, temporary, fixed term or inward secondment basis. The Code also applies to seasonal and casual staff, agency workers and volunteers while they are engaged in carrying out duties for the council.

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Appendix 2

Guidance on Participating in Political Activity

The working group are seeking views on whether the Code of Conduct should contain guidance on council employees participating in political activity depending on their role in the council, for example canvassing for a political party, expressing views on political matters in letters to a newspaper, or in books, articles or leaflets.

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Appendix 3

Model Declaration of Interest Form

(extracted from the NI Audit Office 'Conflicts of Interest: A Good Practice Guide')

Register of Interests:

Declaration by Member of Staff

Period: 1 January 20xx to 1 January 20xx

Surname	
Forename	
Title	
Department	
Job Title	
Date of Appointment to Current Position	
Date of Appointment to Council (if different)	

Please include dates and role

1. Company interests – any relationship with a company or commercial organisation; Directorships, paid employment, consultancy, close family connection.

2. Self employment

3. Land or Property Holdings – see page 6 of the NIAO Guidelines on Conflicts of Interest and Representation on Outside Bodies

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4. Charities – trusteeships, governorships or employment with any charities or voluntary organisations.

5. Public Appointments – remunerated or unremunerated.

6. Memberships – including membership of professional or external bodies, trade or other associations

7. **Close Family Links** – specific close family interest in any of the above

8. Other interests – any other interests held by you or your close family

I confirm that the above declaration is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. The interests I have declared include both direct and indirect interests (ie. those of a partner, spouse or close relative) and any specific financial interests are shown.

Signature: …… Date: ……

Print: ……

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Appendix 4

Department of the Environment
www.doeni.gov.uk

Local Government Policy Division 1

To:
Current Chief Executives
Chief Executives of New Councils
HR Managers
Change Managers

Circular LG 43/2014

Level 4
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Town parks
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Telephone: (028) 9082 3396

Email: peter.gregg@doeni.gov.uk

Date: October 2014

Dear Sir / Madam

Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol

The Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors is now in place, in line with the statutory requirements in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

As a separate exercise, The Local Government Reform Joint Forum (LGRJF) has reviewed the Local Government Officer Code of Conduct.

A protocol on working relationships between Councillors and Local Government Officers was previously annexed to the Local Government Officer Code of Conduct, and the Department has revised this in consultation with key stakeholders to create a stand-alone protocol as an annex to both codes. The agreed working relationship protocol is attached for your organisation to implement.

Yours faithfully

Peter Gregg

Peter Gregg
HR and Capacity Building
Local Government Policy Division 1
Enc.

cc: Dr Adrian Kerr LGSC
Dermot O'Hara LGRJF Secretariat

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Local Government Employee
&
Councillor
Working Relationship Protocol

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Issued: October 2014

Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the 2014 Act) creates a new environment for Local Government in Northern Ireland. The 2014 Act includes a new ethical framework for local government, a key element of which is the introduction of a mandatory Code of Conduct for Councillors.

1.2 The 2014 Act imposes a mandatory requirement for Councillors to observe the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors (the Councillor Code), which establishes mechanisms for the investigation and adjudication of complaints and for appeals. With the exception of Part 9 (Planning), the Code came into force on 28 May 2014 the Part of the Code which deals with planning will come into effect from 1 April 2015.

1.3 The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland is responsible for issuing the Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees (2004) (the Employee Code). In conjunction with the Local Government Reform Joint Forum, the Commission has prepared a revised Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees due to come into effect from 1 April 2015.

1.4 Local Government has already established policies and procedures to resolve issues that Employees (for the purpose of this protocol the term 'Employees' or members of staff should be taken to mean any individual employed by a council including those working both full time and part time on a permanent, temporary, fixed term or inward secondment basis. The Protocol also applies to seasonal and casual staff, agency workers and volunteers while they are engaged in carrying out duties for the council), may encounter in the workplace. This protocol does not override any existing Employee policies or legal obligations but seeks to clarify the expected working relationship between Councillors and Employees.

2.0 Purpose

2.1 The protocol is intended to set out the working relationship between Councillors and Employees of councils. It relates to all aspects of the working environment, both physical and virtual. The protocol also advises of the steps to be taken to deal with concerns at an early stage to reduce negative impacts upon Councillors or Employees and ensure the prompt resolution of any difficulties which may arise. All issues raised under the remit of this protocol must be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

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2.2 The protocol should also assist in furthering and developing a harmonious working environment with positive, constructive and professional relationships between Employees and Councillors.

2.3 The protocol reflects the content of both Employee and Councillor Codes of Conduct that demand the highest standards of personal conduct at all times. It upholds the seven Nolan Principles and the additional principles of public life:-

- **Public Duty** - have a duty to uphold the law and to act on all occasions in accordance with the public trust placed in them; to act in the interests of the community as a whole.
- **Selflessness** - should act in the public interest at all times and should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not act in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, friends or associates.
- **Integrity** - should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations, which might reasonably be thought by others to influence them in the performance of their duties.
- **Objectivity** - in carrying out public business, including considering public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, they should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability** - are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and for the way that they carry out their responsibilities and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** - should be as open as possible about the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions when required and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.
- **Honesty** - should act honestly. They have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and should take steps to resolve any conflicts between their private interests and public duties at once and in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** - should promote and support these principles by leadership and example in order to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of the public, to ensure the integrity of their council in conducting business.
- **Equality** - should promote equality of opportunity and not discriminate against any person by treating people with respect regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether or not a person has dependants.
- **Promoting Good Relations** - should act in a way that is conducive to promoting good relations by providing a positive example for the wider community to follow and that seeks to promote a culture of respect, equality and embrace diversity in all its forms.
- **Respect** - Employees and Councillors are reminded that it is acknowledged that the exchange of ideas and opinions on policies may be robust but this should be kept in context and not extended to individuals being subjected to unreasonable and excessive personal attack. They should keep in mind that rude and offensive behaviour may lower the public's regard for, and confidence in, Employees, Councillors and councils, they should therefore show respect and consideration for others at all times.

- **Good Working Relationships** - Councillors and Employees are servants of the public, and are interdependent upon one another. But their responsibilities are distinct. Employees are ultimately responsible to the Chief Executive[2]; Councillors are responsible to the electorate. The working relationship between Councillors and Employees must at all times be professional, courteous and based on mutual respect and trust. Neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position. All Councillors and Employees are responsible for ensuring they understand what behaviour is required of them, complying with respective Codes of Conduct. Both share a responsibility for understanding sensitivities and feelings of others and avoiding behaviour that could cause offence or distress.

3.0 Conduct of Local Government Employees towards Councillors

3.1 Employees must treat all political groups and individual Councillors equally, fairly and remain politically neutral at all times. Employees will provide professional, impartial and effective support, to enable Councillors to fulfil their role, in and on behalf of, the council. Employees will not seek to influence or lobby a Councillor with regards to personal issues.

3.2 It is important that there should be good working relationships between senior council employees and Chairs of Committees / Mayors. However such relationships should not be allowed to become so close as to cast doubt either on an officer's ability to deal impartially with other councillors, or the Chair/Mayor's ability to deal impartially with other employees.

4.0 Procedure

4.1 In the event that a Councillor wishes to raise either an informal or formal complaint regarding the conduct or behaviour of an Employee, the following process should be followed:

Informal Approach

4.2 A Councillor should seek to raise the matter in the first instance with the relevant Head of Service or Director who should seek to resolve the matter with the Employee concerned. The Councillor must not engage directly with the Employee, nor make any attempt to reprimand or discipline the Employee.

4.3 If the matter is about the conduct of an Employee at Head of Service or Director level, the Councillor should address their concern to the Chief Executive.

4.4 The Head of Service/Director/Chief Executive will undertake to resolve the matter through discussions with the Employee concerned and report on the outcome to the Councillor.

[2 A Chief Executive is also an employee and is ultimately responsible to the Council]

Formal Approach

4.5 If the Councillor is unhappy with the outcome of the informal approach or considers the initial complaint to be of a serious nature, they should raise the matter with the relevant Head of Service or Director and make their Party Group Leader, if relevant, aware of the complaint.

4.6 The relevant Head of Service/Director (or Chief Executive if applicable), will ensure the matter is investigated according to the relevant council procedures consulting with appropriate human resource sections.

4.7 The outcome of the investigation may result in:-

- no further action being required,
- a verbal or written apology to the Councillor with an acknowledgement by the Employee that their conduct failed to meet the agreed standard and an undertaking that there will be no recurrence or
- referral for consideration under the council's disciplinary procedure.

4.8 The Head of Service/Director (or Chief Executive if applicable), will write to the Councillor and Group Party Leader, if relevant, advising of the outcome.

4.9 The Employee will be informed in accordance with the relevant council procedures.

4.10 If the complaint is in relation to the Chief Executive the procedures specified in the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Executives of Local Authorities or the appropriate mechanism at that time will be followed.

5.0 Conduct of Councillors towards Employees

5.1 Councillors' engagement with Employees must be equitable, reasonable, courteous and respectful and ensure that the impartiality of Employees is not compromised. Councillors must abide by their Code and their council's standing orders.

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Procedure

5.2 In the event that an Employee wishes to raise either an informal or formal complaint regarding the conduct or behaviour of a Councillor, the appropriate support must be provided by their respective line manager and the following procedure should be followed:

Informal Approach

5.3 An Employee should seek to raise the matter in the first instance with their relevant Head of Service or Director, providing details of the incident that has occurred. The Employee must not engage directly with the Councillor. If necessary, the Head of Service or Director may involve the Group Party Leader, if relevant.

5.4 The Head of Service or Director will undertake to resolve the matter through discussions with the Councillor concerned and report on the outcome to the Employee and the Chief Executive.

Formal Approach

5.5 If the Employee is unhappy with the outcome of the informal approach or considers their complaint to be of a serious nature, they may wish to consult with their recognised Trade Union representative, if applicable prior to raising the matter formally (verbally or in writing) with the relevant Head of Service or Director. The Employee and their representative may also raise the complaint directly with the senior Human Resource Employee in the Council.

5.6 The relevant Head of Service/ Director, (or senior HR Employee if applicable), will ensure the matter is investigated according to the appropriate council investigatory process.

5.7 The Councillor and Party Group Leader, if relevant, will be advised of the complaint and should agree to co-operate with the investigation to establish the facts.

5.8 The outcome of the investigation may result in:-

- no further action being required, or
- a verbal or written apology to the Employee with an acknowledgement by the Councillor that their conduct failed to meet the agreed standards and an undertaking that there will be no recurrence.

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5.9 If the Head of Service/Director (or senior HR Employee), considers that the circumstances of the complaint is sufficiently serious or a pattern of behaviour emerges, they may recommend to the Chief Executive that the matter is raised at a formal meeting with the Party Group Leader, if relevant. The minutes of this meeting should be presented to the appropriate governance committee for consideration.

5.10 The Head of Service/ Director (or senior HR Employee), will write to the Employee (and where appropriate their recognised Trade Union representative) advising of the outcome. If the Employee is unhappy with the outcome, they may request that their complaint be reviewed by the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will review the complaint and advise the Employee (and their Trade Union representative) of their decision.

5.11 The Councillor and the Group Party Leader, if relevant, will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation and consideration of further action.

(To note: This protocol does not preclude an employee, at anytime, if they think it necessary, to write to the Commissioner for Complaints setting out how, in their opinion, a Councillor has breached the Code).

This protocol is the interface between current Councillor and Employee Codes of Conduct, which require the highest standards of personal conduct, including activities on social media, to be maintained at all times.

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Working Group on the Climate Crisis

Monday, 14th September, 2020

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Members present:	Alderman Copeland; Councillors Baker, Bunting, de Faoite, Ferguson, Hutchinson, McReynolds and Smyth.
In attendance:	Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience; Ms. C. McKeown, Sustainable Development Manager Ms. C. Shortt, Policy and Data Analyst; Mr. R. McLernon, Resilience Co-ordinator; and Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.
Also attended:	Ms. L. Leonard, European Manager.

Election of Chairperson

Nominations were sought to fill the vacant position of Chairperson and it was:

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite, and

Resolved - That Councillor Smyth be appointed to the position of Chairperson for the period ending June, 2021.

(Councillor Smyth in the Chair)

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th February, 2020 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

Update on Final Resilience Strategy

The Commissioner for Resilience provided the Working Group with an update on the Final Resilience Strategy which was an important component within the Belfast Agenda. She provided the Members with an overview in regard to the structure and decision making process in relation to the development of an adaptation and mitigation plan by 2021, at both a local and City Wide level, including the development of a local plan for the Council itself.

It was reported that the development of the City Wide Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan was owned by the Resilience and Sustainability Board and that it had met throughout the Covid-19 crisis. The Members were made aware of the Resilience goal contained within the strategy to deliver a low-carbon, climate resilient economy within a generation. The Commissioner provided the Working Group with an overview in regard

to the work and role of the Climate Commission and stated that, it was anticipated that the Resilience Strategy would be published by the end of 2020. She referred to the three core element of the Resilience Strategy vis a vis:

- Resilience Assessment
- Ambitions Document and
- Delivery Plan

The Commissioner stated that it was anticipated that the final version of the Resilience Strategy would be presented to Council in November 2020.

The Members were provided with a number of core elements contained within the strategy including, amongst other things, the setting of a carbon budget for Belfast, proposals to enhance air quality for the city and the planting of one million trees by 2035. She highlighted also the importance of integrating both the economic and climate strategy elements, as part of the overall Resilience Strategy. She referred to the work in relation to waste water drainage infrastructure and of the need to integrate services.

The Resilience Co-ordinator and Policy Data Analyst provided the Working Group with an update on the process undertaken, and results attained, following the public consultation exercise and online survey, on the recommendations contained with the draft Resilience Strategy. It was reported that the public consultation exercise had operated from January 2020 till June 2020 and that 13,000 inputs had been received from Urban Scale interventions, an organisation used to assist with the consultation exercise.

The Resilience Co-ordinator referred to a number of workshops which had been held throughout the city which had proved successful in securing public engagement and that, as part of this process, the public had been asked to provide a list of risks and stresses, as result of climate change, which they felt would have an adverse impact on their lives. He stated further that the results of the consultation had been beneficial in assisting with the development of the Resilience Strategy.

The Policy Data Analyst referred to the positive feedback which had been received, in response to the consultation exercise, and the collective agreement which had been received in relation to the fourteen stresses and shocks identified resulting from climate change. It was reported that issues such as mental health, food insecurity, poor education, segregation and division appeared prominently within the survey responses. The Policy Data Analyst stated further that, it was rewarding to find that many issues such as sustainable transport and clean air had been incorporated within the Resilience Strategy.

In response to the presentation, a number of issues were raised by the Working Group including, the need to secure quick wins to operationalise the strategy and the need to engage with the Housing Executive to undertake an extensive retro-fit programme in regard to its older housing stock. The Working Group referred also to the need for substantial investment in waste water solutions and the investment required in terms of infrastructure to minimise waste.

In response, the Commissioner agreed that the Council could take a lead in many of the areas suggested. She stated however that some of the positive suggestions required the cooperation of other external organisations including central government departments and that funding would be required to give effect to the realisation of those proposals. She agreed also that many of the suggestions could be incorporated as recommendations within the Resilience Strategy.

The Working Group thanked the Officers for their informed and detailed presentation and requested that a copy of the slide presentation be circulated to the Members of the Working Group.

Noted.

Presentation of Mini Stern findings and Next Steps

The Commissioner for Resilience provided the Working Group with information in relation the need for climate action as identified within the Mini Stern findings and the potential implications globally, should temperatures rise on a progressive scale of between 1c -5c, relative to pre-industrial levels. She highlighted the need to develop a carbon roadmap and to secure a target on carbon emissions. The Working Group was informed of the revised target of restricting global temperature increases to not more than 1.5c by 2050. The Commissioner referred to the need to grow the renewable energy sector and to tackle the problems associated with heat loss and pollution from buildings including, securing a reduction in transport emissions. She referred to the success of the electricity sector in reducing emissions and highlighted and the need to undertake a min-stern, specifically in relation to consumption.

The Commissioner stated that Belfast had a carbon budget projected to 2050 but highlighted the fact that, given the current annual carbon emissions, the projected carbon budget would be consumed within the next ten years. She referred to the urgent need to radically reduce carbon emissions if a target of net zero emissions was to be achieved by 2050. She stated that progressing under a business as usual model would not achieve the desires reductions necessary. The Commissioner stated that Belfast would need to reduce its emissions by a factor of 8.4% annually, if the required target was to be achieved.

The Working Group was informed of the potential economic benefits associated with investing in renewable energy and the employment and wealth creating benefits associated with producing a home-grown renewable energy source. The Commissioner referred to the work undertaken by the Council, in conjunction with both the Housing Executive and Translink, to reduce carbon emissions and of the support afforded by Queen's University and the Resilience Board in providing research and guidance to help the city achieve its ambitions in its carbon reduction programme.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the delivery and roll out of the affordable warmth scheme, for which the Council was a delivery partner, the Commissioner suggested that it might be prudent to invite a representative from DfE to address the Working Group in the matter, given that DfE was working currently on an energy strategy for the province and had requested a response from local government in that regard.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and thanked the Commissioner for Resilience for her detailed and informative presentation.

Update on Belfast City Council Climate Plan

The Commissioner for Resilience reminded the Working Group that the Council had signed off previously, the methodology associated with undertaking its Climate Plan. She referred specifically to a key element of that plan involving an environmental sustainability audit which would involve examining all aspects of the Council's functions, including its assets, policies and their impact on climate change. She referred to the need to undertake a financial exercise to evaluate the costs associated with making the necessary adjustments to these areas. She stated that the environmental sustainability audit would be mapped against both the sustainable development framework and relevant legislation, in order to identify the Council's strengths and weaknesses

associated with its policies and process. She stated further that, the mapping exercise would help identify the costs associated with making the necessary adjustments to meet the targets identified within its climate plan.

The Working Group was informed that under the Council's climate adaptation and risk assessment, it would be necessary to undertake a comprehensive risk assessment in relation to the Council's assets and specifically, identify the impact climate change might have on its asset portfolio. The Commissioner informed the Members that the climate adaptation plan on was being undertaken currently, in partnership with Climate Northern Ireland, who would be invited to address the Working Group with an update on the progress of its work, in October 2020.

The Commissioner referred to a third strand of work commissioned by the Council in respect of an energy review which would examine how the organisation procures its energy and what opportunities might be utilised to improve energy efficiency, generate its own supply of energy including the potential to form energy partnerships with other suppliers.

Noted.

DfE Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland and BCC involvement in subsequent expert Working Groups

The Sustainable Development Manager informed the Members that DfE had appointed a number of Working Groups to assist in the development of the new Energy Strategy. She stated that there were seven groups in all, focussing on transport, energy efficiency, heat etc. and that representatives from the Council were sitting on two of those group vis a vis, Transport and Energy Consumers. She highlighted the importance of this work in bringing new and innovative solutions to the table. She noted that the close partnership arrangements between the Council and DfE on this project was mutually beneficially, as each was learning form the other. She noted that within the energy consumers group there was a sharp focus on the need to protect consumers from the impact of both energy price hikes and scarcity of supply.

Noted.

Update on Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

The Working Group was informed that the Sustainable Development Manager was leading the Innovate UK VPACH 2 project which focussed on repurposing Virgin Media's internet and communications services for the purpose of electric vehicle charging. She reported that the project had a focus of providing infrastructure in ' hard to reach' areas where terraced housing effectively meant residents had no access to off – street charging. She reported that by repurposing Virgin Media's infrastructure this would negate the need to carry out unnecessary excavation work. She stated that there were seven work packages which included the development of a geo-spatial planning tool, and a web form for the requisition of charge points, the promotion of electric vehicle use and the trailing of electric bikes.

It was reported that when the project started it was anticipated that there would be no physical build out of charging infrastructure in the city during the project, however, a policy change in Northern Ireland in March, now provided an opportunity for commercial charge point operators to enter the market. She stated that there were still hurdles to overcome before the private sector investment was realised. She reported that the Council was working closely with DfI to explore the possibility of building targeted charging infrastructure to test the market and encourage new business models to develop.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and requested that a briefing paper on the details of the project be made available to the Members, in order to provide more detailed information on the issues to be resolved around the project.

PCAN Belfast Climate Commission - future programme of work

The Commissioner for Resilience highlighted the work and roles of the Climate Commission and Resilience Board, the former which focused on the provision of advice, research and data analysis and the latter dealing primarily with, the delivery of projects. She highlighted the need to forward the mini-stern to central government officials to secure cooperation on this important issue.

The Working Group was informed that the Climate Commission incorporated a number of sub-groups relevant to each of the cities involved in climate mitigation measures and that, the sub-groups relevant to Belfast were:

- Community Climate Action
- Just Transition and
- Green Finance

The Commissioner referred to work which had been undertaken with other cities in order to ascertain how they had structured some of their projects, with particular reference to climate resilient infrastructure and how such projects could be funded in the future. She emphasised the important relationship between the Council and the Climate Commission and stated that, should the Members wish to be provided with further information on the work of the Climate Commission, she would be happy to make that information available.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Update on Assembly All-Party Group on Climate Action (facilitated through Sustainable NI)

The Commissioner for Resilience agreed to bring an update to the Working Group, as a standing item, on the work of the All-Party Group on Climate Action.

Illumination of City Hall

The Working Group considered a proposal by the chairperson, Councillor Smyth, to illuminate the City Hall on 8th October, 2020 to celebrate Clean Air Day, subject to authority being granted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The proposal was seconded by Councillor de Faoite and the Commissioner agreed to forward a report in the matter, to that Committee, on behalf of the Working Group.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that its next meeting would be held on Monday, 19th October at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson

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