

# Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section  
Chief Executive's Department  
Belfast City Council  
City Hall  
Belfast  
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast  
City Council**

## **MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

\*To which all Members are invited

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Monday, 12th November, 2018 at 12.30 pm, 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) Declarations of Interest
2. **Verbal Update re Homelessness in the City**
3. **Towerblock Update (For information Only)** – The Housing Executive will not be presenting on this at the meeting but welcome any questions that the Members might have **(Pages 1 - 18)**



# Tower Blocks Draft Action Plan Briefing

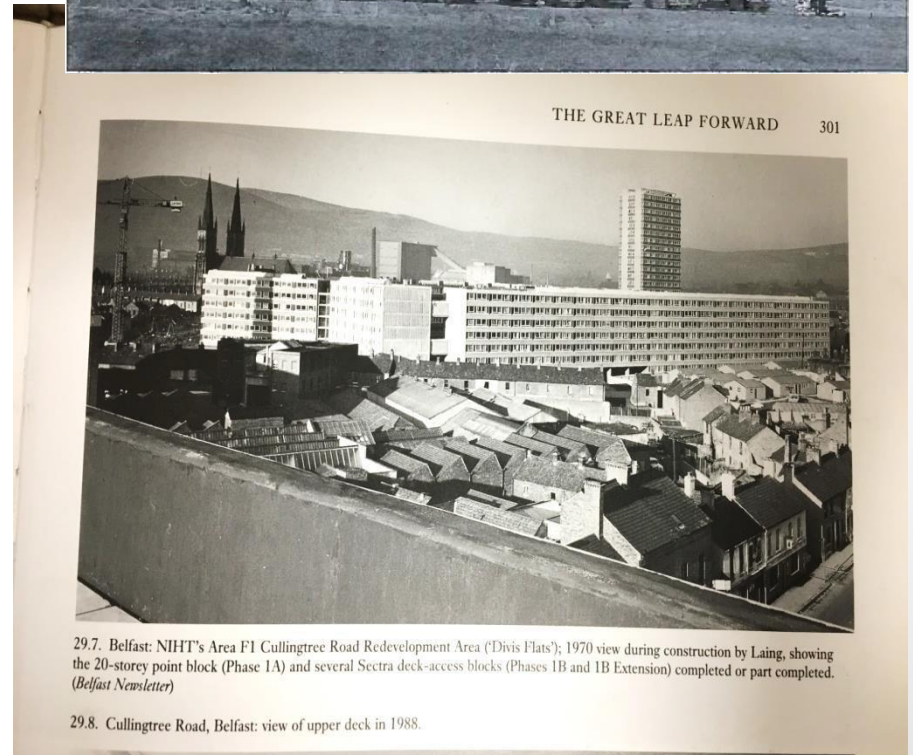
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Jennifer Hawthorne  
Regional Manager for Belfast

# Introduction

- High Rise epitomises post-war 'modern' housing
- N.I. blocks built in 1950s-60s
- 33 blocks in NI (25 in Belfast)
  - 1,931 flats
  - Primarily 2-bedroom
  - 1,650 NIHE
    - 1,621 residential
    - 29 other uses
  - 281 sold flats

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29.7. Belfast: NIHT's Area F1 Cullinstree Road Redevelopment Area ('Divis Flats'); 1970 view during construction by Laing, showing the 20-storey point block (Phase 1A) and several Sectra deck-access blocks (Phases 1B and 1B Extension) completed or part completed. (Belfast Newsletter)

29.8. Cullinstree Road, Belfast: view of upper deck in 1988.

# Background to Strategy/Action Plan

- Tower Block Strategy requested by DSD Minister in 2014
  - Postponed until completion of Savills' Asset Commission work
- Strategy approved by Board in September 2015 and Minister in February 2016
  - Recommended programme of option appraisals as Savills' work raised concerns about future sustainability of the portfolio
- Report on Option Appraisals to Board in November 2016
  - No long term retention and request for Action Plan
- Draft Action Plan prepared in May 2017 for consultation, but put on hold following Grenfell Tower fire
- Draft Action Plan approved by Board in May 2018 as the basis for consultation with stakeholders

# Housing Need & Community Sustainability

- Blocks originally catered for a wide mix of household types
  - Lettings policies and demographic/market changes have resulted in portfolio-wide pattern of under-occupation)
    - Primarily mature single, 2-person and elderly households
- Generally good level of satisfaction with the blocks
  - Appears that Grenfell & Coolmoynes fires have had no material change in residents' and applicants' confidence
- Very considerable variation in social housing demand and turnover across the portfolio and associated estates
- Number of locations where demand is low or weak
  - In many of these locations there are opportunities to replace the blocks with new housing that matches need and is more financially sustainable

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- Other locations with high levels of housing stress where blocks address priority housing needs
  - Characterised by low stock turnover, little/no potential new build sites, and competing needs
- Current uncertainty regarding the future post-mitigation impact of Welfare Reform on demand for the blocks
  - Likely to be dependent on the local market
- High proportion of private ownership (15%)
  - % varies considerably across the portfolio, but high in several blocks
  - Many now thought to be privately let
  - Likely that most owners will be reluctant to sell

# Stock Conditions & Investment Need

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- Condition
  - Savills 2014 - blocks require significant investment to extend useful lives and achieve & maintain modern standards
  - Recent expenditure of £23.4 m (mainly in M&E, H&S, cladding)
  - Limited component replacement (£19.5 m backlog)
- 30 year maintenance & management cost = **£308.8 m**
  - Planned maintenance per flat = £84,000 (£44,000 across all stock)
- Projected costs **far exceeds rental income**
  - Highest costs (management and maintenance) vs low rents and sub-optimal service charges
  - Limited potential to reduce costs and increase income
  - Portfolio will require subsidy of £5 million p.a. from rest of stock



# Safety issues

- Significant body of remedial works carried out (or planned) since Grenfell
- Independent Reference Group report
- Future regulatory requirements potentially arising out of the Hackitt Review
- Preponderance of elderly and other vulnerable residents
- Even with all possible fire safety measures implemented, Tower Blocks would still be our stock with the greatest fire safety risk

# Conclusions

- Considerable imperatives for decommissioning the portfolio
  - Cost of retention is excessive - represents a disproportionate call on limited projected resources at the expense of more sustainable stock
  - Mismatch with households' and communities' needs
  - Blocks will continue to be our stock with the highest fire risk
- There are opportunities to clear/rehouse residents
- However, such opportunities vary across the portfolio
- **Conclusion** - a 'decommissioning' plan for the entire portfolio is not possible or deliverable at this time

# Proposed Strategic Approach

- Long term aspiration is to stop using all of the blocks
- Twin track approach is proposed in the short-medium term:
  - Blocks to be decommissioned where there is opportunity to clear/rehouse the residents
  - Blocks to be retained for medium/long term where we have already invested significantly, and where there are currently no/limited opportunities to clear/rehouse the residents
- Categorisation of blocks into Short, Medium and Long term life/action – criteria for decisions on blocks:
  - Condition, safety & investment
  - Housing Needs
  - Community sustainability
  - Opportunity for re-provision
- Periodic review

# Indicative Redevelopment timetable

Short (1-5 years)	Medium (6-10 years)	Long (10+ years)
<p>Latharna, Larne</p> <p>Woodland, Rushpark</p> <p>Beechwood, Rushpark</p> <p>Monkscoole, Rathcoole</p> <p>Abbotscoole, Rathcoole</p> <p><b>Ross, Mount Vernon</b></p> <p><b>Oisin, New Lodge</b></p> <p><b>Moveen, Finaghy</b></p> <p><b>Coolmoyne, Dunmurry</b></p> <p><b>Rathmoyne, Dunmurry</b></p> <p><b>Breda, Belvoir</b></p> <p><b>Kilbroney, Cregagh</b></p> <p><b>Willowbrook, Cregagh</b></p> <p><b>Clarawood, Clarawood</b></p> <p>Magowan, Portadown</p>	<p>Carncoole, Rathcoole</p> <p><b>Mount Vernon, Mt Vernon</b></p> <p><b>Finn, New Lodge</b></p> <p><b>Fianna, New Lodge</b></p> <p><b>Moylena, Finaghy</b></p> <p><b>Ferndale, Dunmurry</b></p> <p><b>Parkdale, Dunmurry</b></p> <p><b>Riverdale, Dunmurry</b></p> <p><b>Belvoir, Belvoir</b></p> <p><b>Woodstock, Cregagh</b></p>	<p>Glencoole, Rathcoole</p> <p><b>Cuchulainn, New Lodge</b></p> <p><b>Eithne, New Lodge</b></p> <p><b>Maeve, New Lodge</b></p> <p><b>Grainne, New Lodge</b></p> <p><b>Divis, Lower Falls</b></p> <p><b>Whincroft, Braniel</b></p> <p><b>Carnet, Ardcarne</b></p>

# Categorisation

## Short term (1-5 years) – 9 blocks in Belfast

- Ross, Mt Vernon
- Oisin, New Lodge
- Moveen, Finaghy
- Coolmoyne, Dunmurry
- Rathmoyne, Dunmurry
- Breda, Belvoir
- Kilbroney, Cregagh
- Willowbrook, Cregagh
- Clarawood, Clarawood

# Short Term Category Proposals

- Blocks where there is opportunity to clear and replace with new build or (where there is potential) seek a private sector option
- Action
  - No further re-lets
  - Tenants awarded Management Transfer status for priority re-housing
  - No further sales of flats
  - Acquisition/vesting of privately owned flats
  - No investment beyond response/cyclical maintenance & H&S works
  - Rents frozen
  - Opportunities explored to acquire local properties for sale
  - Serve notice on relevant telecommunications providers regarding relocation of masts

# Medium Term: 6-10 years

## 9 Blocks include:

- Mount Vernon, Mt Vernon
- Finn, New Lodge
- Fianna, New Lodge
- Moylena, Finaghy
- Ferndale, Dunmurry
- Parkdale, Dunmurry
- Riverdale, Dunmurry
- Belvoir, Belvoir
- Woodstock, Cregagh

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Blocks where clearance will take longer or whose future will be reviewed in light of impact of short term action

- **Action:**

- Holding investment – structural repairs, sprinklers and component replacements (kitchens, bathrooms etc.)

# Long term (11+ years)

## 7 Blocks include:

Cuchulainn, New Lodge

Eithne, New Lodge

Maeve, New Lodge

Grainne, New Lodge

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Divis, Lower Falls

Whincroft, Braniel

Carnet, Ardcar

Blocks with significant investment or where no opportunity/alternative at present

Longer term review re housing need and windfall sites

- **Action:**

- Full improvements – cladding, sprinklers and component replacements



# Estimated 30 year Costs

Cost Elements	Cost (£ms)
Planned investment	£34.3
Response/cyclical maintenance	£40.2
Management	£54.4
Tenants – Home Loss & Disturbance	£5.5
Private Leaseholders – buy-backs, Home Loss etc.	£8.8
Demolitions	£23.0
New Build – construction	£52.7
New build – subsequent maintenance	£6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>£225.0</b>

- Significant funding issues that will require discussion with the Department for Communities

# Other Issues

- New build
  - Several overspill sites would be housing association development
  - Proposal that redevelopment would be by Housing Executive
- Staffing issues
  - Impact on concierges/caretakers
  - Impact on Area Offices' resources
- Telecommunications masts
  - Legal advice being sought in relation to any re-location obligations

# Next Steps

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- Consultation with stakeholders:
  - Presentation to Department for Communities **completed**
  - Presentations to elected representatives **completed**
  - Letters going out to tenants and leaseholders **completed**
  - Local consultation exercise with tenants and leaseholders on proposals and impact **started in September 18**
    - Block-by-block representative groups being established with SCNI
  - Affected staff and TUS **underway**
  - Telecommunications providers **underway**
- Report back to Board on the outcome of consultation **January 18**
- Final Action Plan presented to Board for approval
- Business Case to be submitted to Department for Communities and Department of Finance

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