



Subject:	DoE Policy Consultation on Dilapidated/Dangerous Buildings and Neglected Sites
Date:	13 April 2016
Reporting Officer:	Phil Williams, Director of Planning & Place
Contact Officer:	Stephen Hewitt, Building Control Manager

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to inform Members of a policy consultation document launched by the Department of the Environment (DOE) on 10 March 2016, relating to Dilapidated/Dangerous Structures and Neglected Sites.
1.2	The Minister of the Environment, Mark H Durkan MLA has initiated a review of the legislation available to district councils to deal with the impact on local environmental quality of dilapidated/dangerous buildings and neglected sites. Much of the legislation relating to this area of environmental policy dates back to the 19th century and in many cases applies only to specific geographical areas.
1.3	The policy consultation considers a range of options to enhance protection of the environment by ensuring that district councils have the appropriate powers to effectively tackle this problem. However, Members should note the DOE has indicated its preference at this stage is for a comprehensive revision of primary legislation in this area.
1.4	This consultation will run for 16 weeks and will close on 30 June 2016. The consultation document can be accessed using the following link: https://www.doeni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/doe/environment-consultation-dilapidation-policy.pdf

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the contents of this report; and - Note that officers develop a draft response to this consultation document to be brought back to this Committee and the People and Communities Committee in May for detailed consideration.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Members should be aware that this review of legislation is to a large part as a result of concerted lobbying by the Building Control Service on behalf of the Council over many years. In dealing with issues under the current legislative framework the Service identified significant deficiencies and loopholes which adversely impacted its ability to take effective action in certain circumstances.</p>
3.2	<p>Council officers met with the then Minister of the Environment, Alex Attwood MLA, to seek a review of the legislation in this area and, further to subsequent meetings with DoE officials, a discussion document was issued by the DoE in March 2014, 'Environmental Legislation: Dilapidated/Dangerous Buildings and Neglected Sites'.</p>
3.3	<p>In response to this discussion paper the Health and Environmental Services Committee, at its meeting of 4 June 2014, agreed that the position of Belfast City Council is that the current legislation for dealing with dangerous, dilapidated, ruinous buildings and abandoned sites is not fit for purpose in certain circumstances. Copies of the Committee report and Council response from this time are attached at Appendix 1 & 2 to this report.</p>
3.4	<p>Council officers from Building Control, Environmental Health, Legal Services, Economic Initiatives and the Planning Service will discuss the various aspects of this consultation document and produce a draft response for consideration by Members.</p>
3.5	<p>It is intended that the draft response will be brought to both this Committee and the People and Communities Committee, given the cross cutting nature of the policy consultation, in May for detailed consideration. Subject to consideration by the Committees a response will be taken to Council in June and subject to ratification, the response shall then be forwarded to the DoE.</p>
3.6	<p>The problems associated with dilapidated and dangerous buildings are many and varied,</p>

<p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p>	<p>however in respect of this Committee some of the main issues include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of amenity (including visual amenity) • effects on property value • impact on tourism and investment • ability to attract global events <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>As part of the detailed consideration of this policy consultation, consideration will be given to the resource implications attached to any new legislation. This will be in the context of strengthening the ability of the Council to recover costs in respect of works carried out in default, which the Council undertakes to remedy and alleviate the issues caused by buildings which are dilapidated and/or dangerous.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The DoE has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment of the proposals contained in this policy consultation. It concluded that there is no evidence to indicate that any of the proposals contained in this consultation will have any differential impact on the equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
<p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>Appendix 1 – Health and Environmental Services Committee Report, 4 June 2014, on proposed changes to legislation dealing with dangerous, dilapidated, ruinous buildings neglected sites.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Belfast City Council response to previous DoE review, approved by Health and Environmental Services Committee on 4 June 2014.</p>