

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMC/SC

Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 27 August 2024 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber

In the Chair: Councillor P Byrne

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor W Clarke	Councillor C Enright
Councillor K Feehan	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor V Harte
Councillor T Howie	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor C King
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Rice	Councillor J Truesdale

**In attendance in Chamber:
(Officials)**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director Active & Healthy Communities
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Also in attendance in
Chamber:**

NI Housing Executive

Ms Grainia Long – Chief Executive
Mr John McCartan – South Regional Manager
Ms Claire Creaney – South Down Area Manager
Ms Sinead Collins – Head of Place Shaping South
Mr Andy Kennedy – Assistant Director Asset Strategy

**Also in attendance via
Teams:**

NI Housing Executive

Mr David Palmer – Regional Programme Delivery Manager
Mr Mark Halliday – Assistant Director Programme Delivery
Ms Caroline O'Hare – Head of Private Grants

SC/013/2024

APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan, Campbell, Devlin, Finn, Galbraith, Howell, Larkin, Lee-Surginor, Lewis, Magennis, McEvoy, D Murphy, S Murphy, Sharvin, Taylor and Young.

SC/014/2024

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation to the meeting and invited them to make their presentation. (Copy attached to these minutes)

The Delegation outlined some details regarding a breakdown of total homes within the District, and their spend within the District over the 2023/24 period, detailed the new Housing For All initiative, and provided an overview of the waiting list trends over the past few years. They further outlined some key housing challenges and highlighted some ideas that were being explored regarding addressing these, such as new builds, land banking and the potential use of private land.

Following this, the Delegation provided some information regarding projected spends over the next number of years and expressed their optimism regarding “fabric first” retrofits of 1,400 homes and low carbon heating installations, and highlighted the New Procurement Legislation which would hopefully allow the Housing Executive to invest in and add to its stock.

Following the presentation the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- What steps was the Department taking to reach a solution to the growing housing need, and could Council provide any assistance?
- What was the funding source for the new builds being completed for the first time in 24 years, given the recent reduction in housing funding?
- The Delegation was thanked for their communication regarding funding in relation to the Shrigley Memorial Clock and were urged to reconsider the fact that they could not make a donation to the project.
- The delegation was commended for their support of the Shrigley’s recent 200th anniversary festival and the involvement of the community engagement officer.
- Was there a possibility of a cross-border initiative, given that there was potential land availability in Counties Louth and Monaghan, and was it possible to look at working collaboratively with officials in these areas to help plan for the future?
- Members advised that they had been informed of a number of abandoned houses within certain areas, and queried both what the procedure was in relation to these, and what impact they had on the Housing Executive’s duty of care to those on the waiting list.
- The Delegation and their team were thanked for all the hard work they continually offered and for responding so quickly and willingly when contacted.
- Was landbank an option that could be reconsidered as this could prove suitable for the current housing needs?
- Could sheltered or supported housing be considered in Rowallane, to allow residents in larger houses to downsize to more suitable accommodation and allow families on the current waiting list to move into the larger houses?
- Was the Housing Executive able to provide some funding for supported housing or a community hub in Shrigley?
- Following the 2020 Ministerial statement regarding the partial revitalisation of the Housing Executive, what progress had taken place and to what extent would that bridge the gap between supply and demand for housing needs.
- It was queried why the Housing Executive would borrow against rental income, and not against existing collateral stock.

The delegation responded as follows:

- There was unfortunately no simple answer to solving the housing crisis as three things were needed at once to solve the issue, those being available and affordable land, delivery capacity and subsidy to outlay the costs.
- Council was commended on the working partnership with the Housing Executive over the last number of years, and this was credited as one of the reasons for some of the new builds going ahead.
- It was noted that a solution could be public land working alongside private land, although a strategic approach was needed to make use of public land for housing to address constraints given that the need was known.
- Housing Associations had played a vital role in delivering affordable housing; however, Members were reminded that the Housing Executive could not direct Housing Associations where to focus their work, they merely produced an annual report that highlighted the housing need in an attempt to identify sites.
- It was stressed that the Housing Executive were keen to be able to build new houses, and to work alongside Housing Associations on these new builds.
- Members were informed that the Housing Executive had bid for funding for 2000 homes across NI from the NI Executive and had received funding for approximately 600.
- The delegation stressed that they were aware of the housing need and were focusing on how to address it, and this predominately meant focusing on using public and private land effectively.
- It was noted that Newry, Mourne and Down Council was a predominately rural council area and highlighted that there was a large unmet need for housing settlements across the District, however the Delegation stressed that there was not the site availability for this need due to competition from the private sector, the constraints of Planning Policy PPS8 and limited land remaining within designated settlement areas.
- Rural schemes were planned should further funding become available, with a plan to develop 876 new homes across the district, which was approximately 39% of the need across the district.
- The delegation advised that they worked closely with the LDP team to help shape the future for housing and social housing needs and would continue to promote the need for zoned land for social housing over the next 15 years.
- In relation to Shrigley, the delegation noted that they were happy to look at opportunities for funding but were unfortunately not in a position to offer funding.
- There were well adopted policies and procedures in place for dealing with abandoned properties, and the Housing Executive asked for all concerns of potential abandoned houses be forwarded for investigation as they were keen to address the unmet housing need.
- The delegation advised that they were working to identify any funding opportunity to subsidise a new supply of housing and advised this funding was being maximised.
- Some funding was also being utilised by a smaller number of partner organisations who provided temporary accommodation. However, the Housing Executive were limited in their expansion scope due to the legal frameworks with the Department of Communities.
- The Delegation advised that while their legal parameters had not changed, the 6 new houses they were building was a pilot project with two aims
 - To demonstrate that a low energy, passive house can be delivered using modern construction methods.
 - That a small, perfectly formed cul-de-sac was not going to cost a lot to build and maintain.
- It was noted that there were 520 units within the District, and a large number of them were smaller apartments. It was hoped that people would downsize and allow the option of the larger homes for families, but this wasn't always a straightforward process.

- The Housing Executive noted that they utilised a supporting people model, rather than supported accommodation, but were always willing to adapt to reflect the needs of the waiting list.
- Members were advised that following the ministerial statement of 2020, the Housing Executive had been enabled to commence a business plan to look at long term investment requirement over the next 30 years, to identify what funding would be required against rental incomes.
- The Housing Executive advised that they did not have the ability to borrow funds to build new houses as it was considered general NI public borrowing. However, small steps were ongoing to allow some funding to be allocated to continue their small build and land banking pilot.
- The delegation advised that they recently received approval from the Department to acquire lands on a small scale to enable them to deliver more new homes, and while it was a small-scale approval, they expressed their hope at this being a step towards change.
- The Delegation advised that any borrowing they availed of was against any rental income the loan was secured against existing stock, and that any repayments were made form rental income which had to at least remain at a level to afford loan repayments.

Councillor O’Hare left the meeting during the above discussion – 6.52pm

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for their presentation and time.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.57pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7th October 2024.

Signed:

Chairperson

Director

27 August 2024

Newry, Mourne & Down
District Council

NIHE Housing
Investment Plan 2023-26

Annual Update 2024



Newry, Mourne and Down



Community Planning update

- The Housing Executive takes a lead role on the Community Planning priority 'Access to Quality Housing' and chair the Housing Needs Working Group.
- During 2023/24, the co-designed 2019 Housing Action Plan was reviewed by the Housing Needs Working Group. The updated Plan details achievements to date and highlights key priorities including identifying and addressing housing need in rural areas, targeting homelessness and ensuring appropriate provision for those with complex housing requirements.
- The updated Plan was approved by the Strategic Partnership Board in June 2024 for publication later this year.
- Aligned to this, the Housing Executive continues to work with partners to progress the housing led regeneration project at the site of the former North Street flats in Newry.

Tenure Breakdown & Total Homes



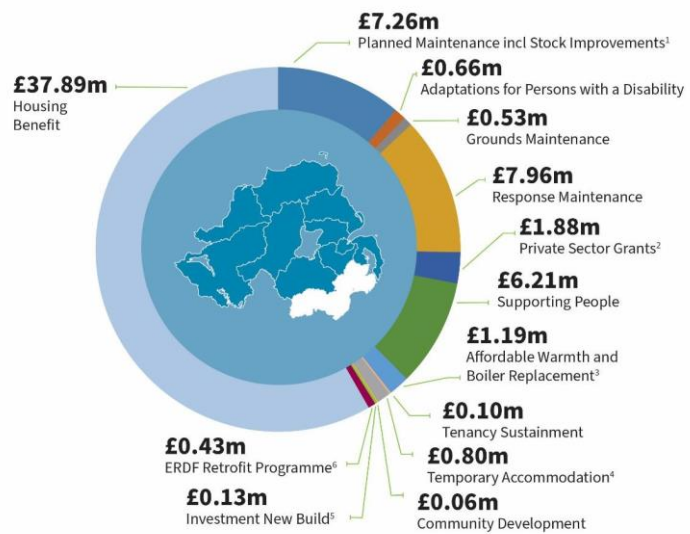
68,398
households

Managed 5,164
social homes

Housing Executive Spend 2023/24

£65.10m

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council 2023/24 Public Sector Housing Spend (£m)



New homes on site in the last year..

- **In 2023/24:**
 - **97** new social homes completed; and
 - **528** new social homes under construction at end of March 2024.



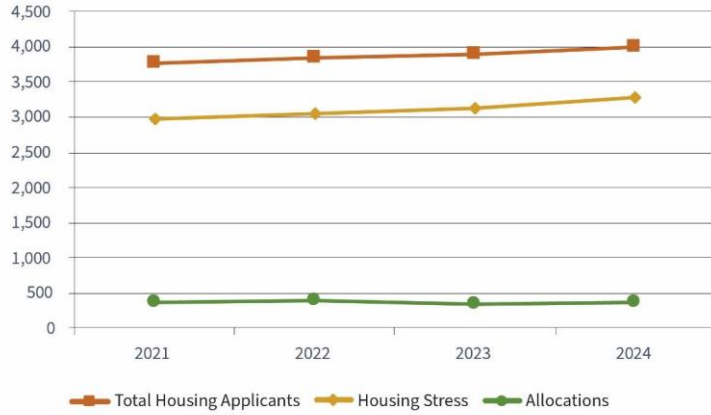
New Housing for All role

- In 2023/24 management of the 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme transferred to NIHE from DFC with plans to further develop this successful partnership for the Good Relations programme in the coming years.
- The Programme has its origins in the NI:TBUC Strategy which reflects the Executive's commitment to Improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.
- Within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area, **nine** Housing for All schemes have been completed and celebrated as shared, with **three** potential schemes at pre allocation stage.



Waiting List Trends 2021-2024

Social Housing Waiting List Trends



Source: NIHE

New build / SHDP

Future Housing Requirements:

2,234 new social housing units are needed over next five years.

2023/26 SHDP – 388 (gross) new social housing units programmed.

5 Year SHDP Performance

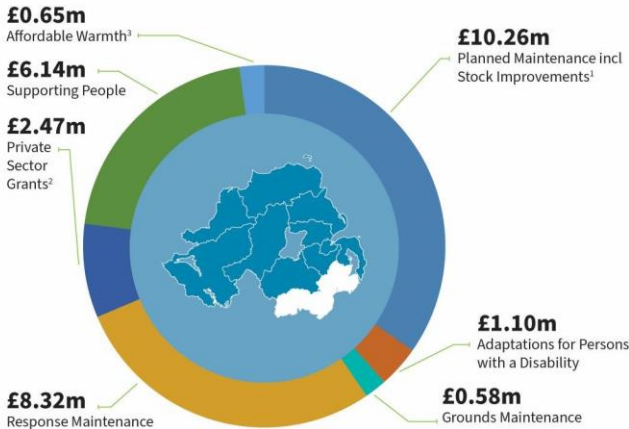
1,217 starts (715 urban and 502 rural) was the SG target for NMD during the 5-year period.

642 starts (595 urban and 47 rural) were achieved against the target.

Resulting in 575 fewer starts (120 urban and 455 rural) against the SG Target.

Projected spend 2024/25
£29.52m

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council 2024/25 Projected Public Sector Housing Spend (£m)



Key housing challenges

- 490 placements in temporary accommodation in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area during 2023/24. Increased reliance on **non-standard accommodation** including hotels and B&Bs.
- 3,986 applicants on the waiting list for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area at March 2024, with 3,286 (82%) in housing stress.
- Just over 360 social housing allocations in 2023/24. An identified need for 2,234 new social housing units over next five years.
- Projected 30 year NIHE stock investment requirement of £631.6 million
- Challenges with the delivery of planned & response maintenance including major adaptations.
- Reduced budget for Affordable Warmth scheme which supports fuel poverty households in the private sector

Key Housing Opportunities

- Across Northern Ireland, the NIHE has recently completed a programme of 'fabric first' retrofits in 1,400 of our homes, and has commenced a programme of 300 - 400 low carbon heating installations; huge potential to scale up
- As we increase investment in our stock, positive impacts for local supply chains
- New Modern Methods of Construction Pilot
- Progress ongoing to enable NIHE to borrow in order to invest in its stock and add to new supply
- Supporting local communities through our Community Investment grants
- New Procurement Legislation is forthcoming in October and there are hopes it can lead to greater agility, efficiency and transparency in procurement
- Strategic partnerships on homelessness, e.g. 'Homewards'; systems change

Thank you



Q&A