

Mid Ulster Housing Working Group
Friday 6th December 2019 at Mid Ulster Council Offices Dungannon
Minutes

Attendance

Ailbhe Hickey	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Sinead Collins	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Chris Boomer	Mid Ulster District Council – Planning
Ben Collins	Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
Tracey Ellis	Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
Ray Forbes	Apex Housing Association
Mark Graham	Co-Ownership
Leanne Kelly	North Belfast Housing Association
Niall Sheridan	Choice Housing Association
James Wright	South Ulster Housing Association
Joe Galbraith	Radius Housing
Denise Quinn	Clanmil Housing Association
Katrina Smyth	Habinteg Housing Association
Lucia Carolan	Supporting Communities
Cllr Cora Corry	Mid Ulster District Council
Claire Linney	Mid Ulster District Council
Martina Totten	Mid Ulster District Council

Apologies

Paddy Gray	Chartered Institute of Housing
Dona Knowles	Department for Communities
Kate Clifford	Rural Community Network
Teresa Canavan	Rural Action
Michael Kelly	Rural Action
Cllr Sean McPeake	Mid Ulster District Council Member
Cllr C Elattar	Mid Ulster District Council

Welcome & Apologies

Claire Linney welcomed everyone to the meeting

Draft Local Development Plan

- **Development Unit Threshold for Social and Affordable Housing**
- **Supplementary Policy**
- **Update on Affordable Housing Definition**

Chris Boomer provided an update on the Local Development Plan:

- Draft Local Development Plan to go to public examination.
- All comments and proposed amendment would be debated and potentially taken on board through this process.

- Potential date for public examination is Spring 2020.
- MUDC will continue to keep all members up to date.
- Plan will remain as current draft version

Key issues for Plan to support social housing

1. Unit threshold – 50 units is the current figure and if need required will trigger 25% requirement for social housing (need will be based on engagement with NIHE – look at social housing waiting list and latent demand testing).
2. Any requirements for social housing unit size or mixed tenure will be from NIHE at time of planning application consultation.
3. Masterplans will be provided for very large strategic sites. All other sites will be Key Site Requirements.
4. Phase II land will be released if it is for social housing. This will seek to manage some level of cost for land.
5. Council is currently working to the affordable definition of social housing with public funding or a model of co ownership.
6. Key solution to address social housing is vesting of land; use of threshold and % of social allocation will have a low impact in terms of numbers versus the social housing waiting list. Larger social sites are required.
7. If social housing cannot be provided for within Phase II land then consideration will be given to bringing on board additional sites for social housing (only if Phase II does not suffice).
8. If a developer does not meet the key site requirements of social housing requirement, they may be refused planning.

Discussion

- Importance of supplementary guidance on some key sites to allow developers to plan ahead and social housing associations to engage
- Mixed tenure of housing important
- Affordable housing important to offset social need (this would need to be based on a very clear definition)
- Creating Places already provides for a general technical guidance, however Key Site Requirements will be important.
- Important for NIHE and Planning to engage closely on sites.
- NIHE seeking to support evidence for mixed tenure housing in development plans. Due to land shortage cannot sustain the current level of separation; important to provide choice to those in need.

NIHE Research update

- **Universal Credit & Social Welfare Reform – Issues and Mitigating Action**
- **Private Rental Sector Review for Mid Ulster**
- **NIHE Older Person's Strategy**

Ailbhe Hickey informed the group that Karley Greene, Head of Research for NIHE was unable to attend the meeting to present the research update. Ailbhe agreed to share the links for the researched and confirmed that Karley will present at the next Housing Forum meeting.

Updates were provided for work being undertaken to address Welfare Mitigations:

- Chair of Mid Ulster District Council wrote to Permanent Secretary of Department for Communities requesting an update on the future of the welfare mitigation scheme beyond March 2020. A response was received from Tracy Meharg outlining that in the absence of an Assembly the department is unable to make amendments to the existing legislation to extend the schemes beyond the date.
- NI office are looking at discretionary housing payments and welfare mitigations, to be ready if the Assembly comes into place in January.

NIHE Investment Plan

- **Proposed Development**
 - **Site/land availability**
 - **Social Housing Need in Mid Ulster**
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- Current proposals from Housing Associations for 758 units in 40 sites for Dungannon. Discussion ongoing to bring them forward.
 - Need in Dungannon West, however not all sites are in this area as you need to consider wider area and allow for mixed tenure to seek to alleviate the housing stress.
 - Continued issues re sewerage infrastructure

Update of Action Taken to Tackle Sewerage Crisis

- There is still some capacity for social housing provision.
- Areas of need would continue to be looked at.
- The current capacity issues takes account of planning approvals that will not happen in the short to medium term.
- Often the issue is not capacity but the pipes.

Action: Facilitate a meeting with NIHE, Planning, NIW and relevant housing associations re the potential for social housing in areas of housing stress; mainly Dungannon

The Fundamental Review of the Housing Selection Scheme (Common Selection Scheme)

10 recommendations have been made. They have been presented to the NIHE Board in November and are now pending presentation to the Department, once a minister is in place.

AoB

Homelessness

- Discussion on the importance of homelessness being wider than just rough sleepers. Rural homelessness takes on a different form – multiple unregistered occupancy, staying friends and family.
- NIHE provide temporary accommodation. They are currently reviewing their temporary accommodation and will report to the group when this is complete.
- NIHE have local group established to address this issue. A representative from it is to be invited to next meeting.

Shared assets

- Important to consider government assets for social housing provision.
- A key contributor to meeting need.
- Council to review land and where possible partner for social housing.
- Update to be provided at next meeting

Date of Next Meeting

Friday 5th June 2020 at 1:00pm. Lunch served at 12:45pm.