



<b>Subject:</b>	NIHE Draft Corporate Plan consultation response
<b>Date:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development and John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the draft consultation response to NIHE's Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2024/25 which is due to be submitted to NIHE by 14 <sup>th</sup> December 2022. A draft response will be submitted on behalf of Belfast City Council subject to approval by this committee and further subject to Council ratification in January 2023.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider and approve the Council's draft consultation response submission to the NIHE's consultation on their draft Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2024/25 enclosed with this report at Appendix 2.</li> <li>• Consider and agree that the response, subject to any amendments by Committee, will be submitted by the closing date of 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022 on the basis that it remains subject to ratification by Full Council in January 2023.</li> <li>• <b>Note the draft response has been formed on the basis of previously agreed Council positions on housing which were submitted in response to the Department for Communities consultation on the Housing Supply Strategy 2022-2027 and consultation on Intermediate Rent.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b>Main report</b></p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>Members will know that the NIHE is the Strategic Housing Authority for NI and a public landlord at scale. With an annual budget of more than £1.2bn, NIHE provides a range of public services across NI, with a footprint extending to more than 220,000 homes and services impacting on one in every three people. NIHE is also a Community Planning partner, chairing the Housing-Led Regeneration sub-group (which is aligned to the “Our Place” theme currently being developed as part of the on-going refresh of the Belfast Agenda) which sits under the City Development Board, reporting to the Community Planning Partnership. Through this group, as part of the process of refreshing the Belfast Agenda, NIHE are leading on the collaborative development of an action plan for housing-led regeneration which will help us deliver the agreed Belfast Agenda target to grow the city's population by 66,000 by 2035, with the Local Development Plan (LDP) providing the planning framework to allow us to build the 31,600 homes which are required to meet that target.</p> <p>Although housing has been identified as a priority in its own right in the Belfast Agenda, the wider impact of good quality housing on the health and wellbeing of residents of Belfast and other priority outcomes of the community plan should not be underestimated. It is within this broad, cross-cutting context that Council's draft consultation response has been prepared.</p> <p>Council had previously provided a response to both the Department for Communities Housing Supply Strategy 2022-2027 consultation regarding Proposals for Intermediate Rent.</p> <p><b><u>Emerging draft NIHE Corporate Plan</u></b></p> <p>During the summer and autumn of 2021, NIHE engaged with customers and stakeholders to commence the process of developing their new three year Corporate Plan. These</p>

engagement exercises enabled them to identify a number of strategic themes and key priorities for the next three years (2022/23 – 2024/25).

### **Emerging Priorities and Objectives**

NIHE's draft Corporate Plan sets out six high level priorities / objectives for comment:

- i. We will work with our partners, taking the lead role as the Strategic Housing Authority, to **increase social housing supply** to help meet identified need.
- ii. We will help **NI meet its emissions targets**, address the impact of **climate change** and help sustain and protect our environment for future generations.
- iii. We will invest around **£1,973m\* (over the next 3 years) into our local economy**, through our housing services, construction activity, employment opportunities and through our support for the health, voluntary and community sectors. In the same period we will **process circa £1,148m in Housing Benefit payments** across public and private housing tenures.
- iv. We will work with our partners to **deliver innovative housing solutions** for our customers and to help reduce poverty and improve Health & Wellbeing
- v. We will **engage with our customers** to ensure that they are at the **heart of service improvements and our business delivery model**.
- vi. We will **be an employer of choice** and deliver high quality services for all in N.I.'s increasingly diverse community.

The consultation also includes in its Appendices the NIHE's Annual Business Plan 2022/2023 and associated performance indicators and targets.

Members should note that the NIHE has highlighted a number of overarching caveats in setting the context for the development of the Corporate Plan. These include:

- The strong focus on preparing for a 'revitalised organisation.' NIHE notes that much work has been done during the last year to develop an Outline Business Case to consider and assess the potential options for a new financial model for the organisation to enable it to borrow to invest. Assuming progress will be made on this, the NIHE hopes to be in a position to borrow by 2025.
- The plan notes that Cost of Living impact and considerations is an evolving situation and will be reflected in the Plan at the time of publication.
- The actions allocated to priorities are all "subject to funding allocation" in terms of delivery.

### **Key Considerations**

Below is a summary of the key points raised by officers in the draft consultation response. As noted above, many of these issues were previously highlighted as part of Council's consultation response to the Housing Supply Strategy and the consultation on Intermediate Rent. Details of the full response to the draft NIHE Corporate Plan can be found at Appendix 3 for Members consideration.

- Council notes that where the overall vision statement for the NIHE's Corporate Plan states that "Everyone is able to live in an affordable, sustainable and decent home", that the first stated objective makes reference to "social housing supply" only. Whilst Council recognises the need to and is supportive of the objective to increase social housing supply to meet identified need, we would suggest that as the strategic Housing Authority, NIHE should focus on **work to address housing affordability challenges in a broader sense** as there are also affordability pressures in the private housing markets which require intervention
- NIHE should take a **lead role in providing research, evidence and advice** across a number of areas, including within its capacity as a statutory consultee in planning applications, in relation to for example: the delivery of mixed-tenure developments, implementing an industry standard for retrofitting or standards for energy efficiency, and ensuring that all interventions are the most appropriate and cost effective in the long term.
- As the first Local Development Plans (LDPs) are nearing adoption including Belfast's, the NIHE has a significant role in supporting **the refining and implementing key housing policies** through further work on **providing data and developing new ways of working**
- **Cross-cutting collaboration and policy coordination** is required across all relevant public and statutory sector bodies as well as exploring opportunities to work with third party and private sector partners
- NIHE should **ensure that shared priority areas for action identified in Community Plans are embedded within the Corporate Plan and resourced appropriately** (e.g. Supporting vulnerable people through Complex Lives model and its alignment with Housing First ; co-designing and delivering housing led regeneration schemes etc).
- NIHE should take the lead in working with relevant bodies to **develop industry standards for retrofit** and to seek to maximise the potential benefits and opportunities presented through 'green skills' and address the current mismatch between the skills demand and the current and future supply of such skills into the construction labour

market. Consideration should be given to opportunities to invest in training staff in green skills including retrofitting.

- Encourage NIHE to establish standards which ensures that all **new homes should be built to carbon-zero standards** rather than continuing to build homes which will require retrofitting in the future.
- Welcome the opportunity to continue to **work collaboratively with the NIHE** in terms of the **Council's employability programmes** and ambitions to secure **well paid and sustained employment opportunities** for unemployed and economically inactive residents of Belfast ensuring that we have **inclusive growth**
- Encourage the development and implementation package of new affordable housing products as part of new developments would greatly help **improve choice to a range of more affordable housing options**

In addition to the specific comments on the high level objectives, the Council's response also sets out a range of key considerations which we believe are critical in terms of developing and delivering quality housing supply within the city. Some specific issues are highlighted in our response to question 3 and previously form part of Council's response to the Housing Supply Strategy consultation e.g:

- There are currently a number of **policy, financial and structural challenges** which are impacting upon the ability to successfully **deliver placemaking housing regeneration schemes including the delivery via public /private partnerships**
- Need to address the current and future pressures surrounding **wastewater infrastructure**
- Signposting to key key points highlighted in the **Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission: 'Reset for Growth' Report**
- The need for housing investment funds to support new housing construction at scale in a similar manner to other UK cities and consideration as to how **existing funding** can be best utilised or refocused to support housing led regeneration priorities and unlock development
- Need to support, enable and encourage greater **collaboration between the public and private sector** to design innovative approaches to unlocking key challenges with identified major city housing led regeneration schemes,
- Collaborative approach across government and with private sector in terms of **identification and development of viable land.**
- **A Bolder Vision** – which has '*Promote City Centre Living*' as one of its 4 key moves

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to recognise the significant and importance of city centre living to the future reimagining and sustainability of the Belfast (and other city and towns) high street / city centre. Highlight that the 'A Bolder Vision' has a core focus on 'Promoting City Centre Living', which it is recommended be central to any emerging recommendations from the <b>High Street Task Force</b> and embedded within Executive funding priorities</li> </ul> <p>The consultation concludes by reiterating Council's commitment to continuing to work collaboratively with the NIHE and other stakeholders on maximising housing development and regeneration opportunities across Belfast as well as working together to address many of the associated social changes impacted upon through good quality housing.</p>
4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
	<p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p><b>Appendix 1 Consultee Letter</b></p> <p><b>Appendix 2 NIHE Draft Corporate Plan for consultation</b></p> <p><b>Appendix 3 BCC draft consultation response</b></p>