

## Appendix 2

Mr Peter McCallion  
Committee Clerk  
Committee for Social Development  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Room 412  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McCallion,

### **RE: HOUSING (AMENDMENT) (No.2) BILL**

I refer to your letter of the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2010 to Belfast City Council's Chief Executive with regard to the Housing (Amendment) (No2) Bill.

The provisions of the Bill were considered by the Council's Health & Environmental Services Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2010 and, pending ratification by the Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010, it has been agreed that the following comments be forwarded to you for the consideration of the Committee for Social Development.

The Council welcomes the Bill and would ask that the Committee notes the previous Council's responses to the consultation document "Building Sound Foundations: A Strategy for the Private Rented Sector" and the draft Housing Bill. The Council particularly welcomes the enabling powers for a mandatory registration scheme for all private landlords however there is concern that the scheme is described as "light touch". The Council would seek clarification of the practical implications of a "light touch" registration scheme and would caution against a regularity approach that didn't fully protect the rights of tenants.

The Council is also concerned that the Department's commitment in its previous strategy document to raise the statutory fitness standard for the private sector is not referred to in the Bill. Also, the Bill should specify which authority will regulate the rent deposit scheme.

The Council notes that proposals for a power to allow district councils to promote energy efficiency in residential accommodation in their own districts was previously included in the Regeneration and Housing Bill and is now detailed in the Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill. Whilst welcoming this proposal the Council would restate their comments to the Department in response to this specific recommendation namely:-

- The Council welcomes the proposal to provide Councils with powers to promote domestic energy efficiency as an element in the drive to address fuel poverty.
- The Council understands that an option for a national fuel stamp scheme will be included as a proposal for consideration in a DSD public consultation in the current fuel poverty strategy due out in the spring of this year.

- In order to facilitate this type of support to the fuel poor however the Department may wish to consider a more explicit inclusion in the draft bill that would ensure that Councils have a clear *vires* for such schemes by specifically empowering them to support schemes that are designed to assist the management of heating costs in residential accommodation.
- The council observes that there is an existing synergy with functions it currently holds with Building Control having a regulatory function in relation to building regulations and responsibility for energy performance certificates a certain level of expertise already exists in Councils in respect of this function.

The Council would therefore recommend an amendment to Clause 13 of the Bill – **Functions of district councils in relation to energy efficiency**- paragraph (1) to read:-

“A district Council may take such action as it thinks appropriate for the purpose of promoting the efficient use of energy and to assist the management of heating costs in residential accommodation in its district.”

Under paragraph (2) of Clause 13 should be included:-

“provide or secure the provision of assistance in the management of domestic heating costs;

If the Committee wishes to discuss any of the issues referred to above please contact Mr John Corkey at telephone number 02890 270305.