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The Leading Public Service Union

Brian Campfield General Secretary

YOUR REF

OUR REF

Mr Peter McNaney
 Chief Executive
 Belfast City Council
 City Hall
BELFAST
 BT1 5GS

13th February 2013

Dear *Mr McNaney*

ABOLITION OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE (NIHE)

NIPSA would wish to engage with your Council on the announcement by the Social Development Minister, Nelson McCausland on the proposal to abolish the NIHE and replace it with a Regional Housing Body and a separate landlord function(s) outside of the public sector.

The NIHE as an integrated housing body has served NIHE tenants and prospective tenants well over the past 40+ years ensuring that social housing was allocated on the basis of objective need. The NIHE is much more than a provider of social housing and has been involved in many initiatives over the past 40 years that have developed communities rather than just a collection of houses.

The main driver for the proposals, announced by the Minister, stem from the lack of investment in the provision of public housing over the past 2 decades. NIPSA believes the provision of social housing should be provided by the state and the handing over of 90,000 tenants and properties to one or a number of housing associations to allow for private money to be used to build and maintain the 90,000 properties is not acceptable.

NIPSA do not believe these proposals are in the best interests of tenants, particularly at a time of uncertainty through Welfare Reform changes which are due to come into effect over the next number of months. Many families could find themselves paying higher rents which may not be covered by Housing Benefit with the fear of evictions, arrears etc.

The Minister has also proposed that the Housing Council be abolished. While the Minister has indicated that he will engage a series of engagements with local government on this proposal this is something that Councils will have a view on. However it does seem strange that the Minister has announced the abolition of the Housing Council before engaging with the sector.

NIPSA would welcome the opportunity to address your Council on the proposals which will impact on the many families within your Council area. To date tenants have not been consulted on the proposals and as locally elected representatives it is important you have all the facts and alternative models to represent the interests of your constituents.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A millar".

ALISON MILLAR
Deputy General Secretary

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