



Subject:	Funding for Changing Places Facilities – Response from Minister of Finance
Date:	19th November, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to draw to Members' attention a letter which has been received from the Minister of Finance in response to the Committee's request for funding to be made available for the retrospective installation of changing places facilities in existing premises.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the response.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Background</u> The Committee will recall that, at its meeting on 24th September, it approved a draft response to the Department of Finance's public consultation on updated building control advice on the fitting of changing places facilities.

- 3.2 Changing Places are facilities whereby people with profound and multiple disabilities can avail of toilet and personal hygiene amenities, designed specifically for their needs.
- 3.3 The draft response confirmed the Council's support for the mandatory provision of changing places facilities under Building Regulations, as a positive way of increasing inclusion for service users and their carers.
- 3.4 The Committee was also informed that, following the introduction of similar regulations in England and issues which had been raised around the financial challenges associated with voluntarily providing changing places in existing premises, a £30 million fund had been launched in July, to be distributed through local authorities.
- 3.5 The Committee agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Finance requesting that a similar fund be established in Northern Ireland for retrospective installations in existing premises.
- 3.6 A response has now been received from Mr. Conor Murphy, MLA, Minister of Finance, a copy of which is attached.
- 3.7 The Minister begins by acknowledging the Council's response to the Department of Finance's important consultation on changing places facilities and confirms that the Building Standards Branch is currently analysing the responses and working to publish a summary document in due course.
- 3.8 He goes on to state that he is aware that £30 million of funding for changing places facilities was launched earlier this year in England and that he would be very supportive of a proposal being put to the Northern Ireland Executive to establish a similar fund to support retrofitting facilities here.
- 3.9 He points out that the Department for Communities leads on disability policy and strategy and that it has a track record of establishing and administering grant funding in this area. He adds that he is very sympathetic to the dignity issues arising from the limited provision of changing places facilities and will continue to support an equitable and accessible built environment for everyone. He concludes by recognising that the Council is keen to do so as well and wishes it every success in its work to expand the provision of changing places facilities in the Belfast area.

3.6	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> No implications
3.7	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> No implications
4.0	Document Attached
	Response from Minister of Finance